

their transition back into the civilian workforce. Under current law, the post-9/11 GI Bill only allocates money to veterans for traditional postsecondary education in the classroom, but for many veterans this is a path not meant for them.

For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were over 300,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs at the end of 2016. This gap could be filled by the veterans who use their post-9/11 GI benefits as a stipend to support them while receiving on-the-job training as high-skilled technical workers.

Further, these jobs can be filled at no additional cost to the employer because the cost would be covered by the preexisting GI Bill. This bill would allow businesses all over the U.S., both large and small, to meet their employment needs and help our skilled veterans to enter the civilian workforce.

As long as employers comply with the program and intend to hire the veterans after the internship is over, the veterans will continue to receive funding. This bill is a win for American job growth and, most importantly, a win for our veterans.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense measure.

JOB FLEXIBILITY FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RUTHERFORD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the topic of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1180, the Working Families Flexibility Act.

I would love to take credit for this idea. It is not my own. It is a bill that has been carried by other Members on several occasions. I have had the privilege to carry this bill the last few Congresses, and I am excited that we are going to debate this bill tomorrow and, God willing, have a vote on it.

The Working Families Flexibility Act is a simple amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Fair Labor Standards Act has been the law of the land since 1938.

In 1985, the Fair Labor Standards Act was amended to allow compensatory time. That is paid time off in lieu of cash wages for overtime for public sector employees. But, oddly enough, private sector employees were left out of the equation.

This bill, H.R. 1180, simply provides that the private sector can have access

to compensatory time in lieu of cash wages for overtime. This doesn't eliminate overtime, but, rather, gives flexibility in the workplace for hardworking Americans to make a decision about how to use their time.

Every time an hourly wage employee works an hour of overtime, they would be eligible for an hour and a half of paid leave only if the employer first offers this as a benefit, but, most importantly, that the employee elects voluntarily to choose compensatory time over cash payments for overtime.

Congress cannot legislate another hour in the day, but what we can do is provide flexibility for hardworking moms and dads all over this country that may want to use their accrued overtime to coach a soccer game, help with an aging parent, take their child to the pediatrician, or, quite frankly, accrue the time to go on a mission trip somewhere. But this is an opportunity for us to provide this benefit for employees all over this country, like I said, hardworking men and women that just want flexibility.

It is voluntary. It must be done through a written agreement between the employer and the employee. But, most importantly, outside of being voluntary, the employee can opt out at any time. The employee can cash out, so to speak. There are cash-out provisions in this bill.

So if the arrangement between the employer and the employee is not working out, meaning the employee can't find the appropriate time to utilize the compensatory time, the employee can say: Do you know what? I would rather have my cash payments for overtime.

And within 30 days the employer must provide those cash payments that that employee has rightfully earned.

I just think this is a great opportunity for us to provide this benefit to so many folks out there who are just trying to balance their life and work, their children, their parents, and all of the things that come with that. As a working mom, I certainly can relate to all of the pushes and pulls that parents have on them in wanting to just provide for their family. Again, at the end of the day, this time belongs to that individual, therefore, he or she ought to be able to make a decision about how to use their time.

I have several Members who are here tonight that are going to speak on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER). I thank her so much for her willingness to speak on this issue.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Alabama for yielding, my good friend, MARTHA ROBY, who has been such a leader on this issue. It has been my great privilege to be a sponsor of the Working Families Flexibility Act in the 113th Congress, in the 114th Congress, and now again in the 115th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Working Families Flexibility Act of

2017, which will remove a Federal restriction on private sector employees who would like the option of comp time compensation in lieu of cash for their overtime work, the same as public sector employees. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a voluntary choice made by employees for cash overtime or for comp time.

The last thing our Federal Government should be doing is dictating how our small-business employees and entrepreneur compensation operates. Mr. Speaker, in November, Missourians and many Americans spoke loud and clear: it is time to get government out of the pocketbooks and off of the backs of hardworking Americans.

Americans are also desperate for job flexibility. I know I was also as a working mom when I worked at Ralston Purina in St. Louis, Missouri. They want to have a better balance of obligations of their day-to-day jobs while taking care of family and family matters.

The Working Families Flexibility Act will help us do just that. For the past 30 years, public sector employees have enjoyed the benefit of choosing voluntary paid time off, or comp time, instead of cash wages as compensation for working overtime hours. Private sector workers, who make up an incredibly large portion of our economy, should also reap this benefit. It is simply common sense.

Amending this overtime restriction through this legislation will help bring our workforce standards into the 21st century and allow our workers to do their jobs while still providing them with the voluntary flexibility to raise a family, pursue a college degree, care for aging parents, or tend to the day-to-day obligations that come their way.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Working Families Flexibility Act, as it safeguards workers' time and wages, and protects their use of the comp time they have earned. Most importantly, as we work each day to get our economy back on track, this legislation empowers the American worker with more options and flexibility that will ultimately lead to a better quality of life.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for taking the time to speak on this bill. I appreciate her willingness to speak on behalf of the Working Families Flexibility Act. In doing so, she is speaking on behalf of so many hardworking American families.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure. And I must say, since we do have time, that her being a champion of this in the last three Congresses that I have had the pleasure of working—and my constituents in Missouri's Second District have sent me—it is wonderful to see a working mom like her, who is juggling all of those day-to-day needs, to stand up for private sector workers who deserve the same kinds of options and flexibility that our public service has enjoyed for some 30 years. So I thank her for being a

champion in this way. She is a wonderful legislator and a wonderful mother, too.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), our majority leader. During my time in Congress, I don't know anyone who has been a stronger champion for finding ways to help families using conservative, commonsense ideas.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman MARTHA ROBY is an amazing woman. She is a Congresswoman, she is an attorney, she is a wife, but, most importantly, she is a mother to two beautiful children. She has the same concerns and the same challenges that everybody else across this country has: Does she have enough time? Does she have the flexibility?

Just going through her own life, listening to her constituents, she came forth with this bill. She has worked hard to bring the Working Families Flexibility Act to this floor. She has done it before, and it passed in this House. One of the things I admire most about her is she does not give up. Because it is not about her; it is about the rest of America, and it is also about fairness.

In 1978, Congress granted this choice to government employees. Twenty-nine years later, it is past time we end the double standard and offer the same deals to workers in the private sector.

You can work and work overtime, but then you have the choice if you want to take that in pay, or would you like to have comp time?

Maybe there is a child sick, or maybe you have a family member that comes down with a disease, or another choice. You can go and spend time. You get to direct it. I think that is great policy. That is why government workers have it.

But why can't they have the same standards in the private sector?

Do you know what would happen?

Higher productivity. It would actually move America's economy.

Why?

Because the individual has choice.

Instead of being concerned and worried about something that is happening away that you need to be at, you put that time in. And instead of taking the money, you put it into flexibility.

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When we look at the future and think about the economy we want to have, yes, we want great employees; we want happy employees; we want employees with great productivity. But we don't want that just to happen in government. We want the private sector to have the same fairness that government has.

It is a great idea. But I will tell you, the work that Congresswoman MARTHA ROBY has done has led this charge. It has passed this House before, and we are going to find time in a very busy

week to have the flexibility to do this bill tomorrow because you know what? The rest of America is waiting for it.

I want to congratulate Congresswoman ROBY for her work on it, for not giving up, for listening to constituents across this country, but also for every working family in the private sector to let them have a choice to have the flexibility to be where they need to be after they put the overtime in. It is only fair, and, to me, it is the American way to solve a problem.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader for bringing this bill to the floor and giving it the recognition and the time that it deserves. I appreciate the leader taking his time to be here and speak on behalf of the Working Families Flexibility Act.

I would like to turn now to my friend and my colleague, also from Missouri (VICKY HARTZLER). I just want to point out, though, as I move to her comments, we have to recognize that the workforce has changed. More than 70 percent of mothers today work outside of the home, and the gentlewoman here is certainly one of those who understands that as she has worked so hard and now Tiffany is about to graduate from high school. It seems like yesterday that we were bringing our babies to the floor together.

But 70 percent of mothers today work outside of the home. Fifty years ago, that number was less than 30 percent. So the workforce has changed tremendously, but our policies have not kept up with that change.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER).

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate the gentlewoman championing this issue, and we have brought our kids here and know the challenges of juggling work and family—and we are not alone. As you said, many, many families in this country are facing these same challenges, and that is why I am so excited about your bill and so proud to sponsor it and stand with you tonight.

The family is really the foundation of our country, and to have strong families, we need to be able to make ways to encourage them to be together, especially for those special, special events. I know there are many, many moms and dads out there working today who would love to be able to have the flexibility of the workplace where they can take off and spend some time with their kids at the soccer game, or when they get that phone call from the school that their child is sick, please come pick them up, to be able to have that flexibility to do that and to take them to the doctor or to stay home with them if they are sick. Then, as families age, many families need to be with their parent or need to go to the doctor with them.

These are just commonsense things to allow that flexibility where you could work some overtime and choose, instead of having the extra money, you could choose to be able to use that to

spend time with your family, those people that mean the most to you. That is just precious. It is priceless to be able to do that. And it is really sad now that, in our country, only half of the American workers have this option, and they are workers who work for the government. But yet, if you work for that small business in town or that manufacturer making a product and shipping it overseas, proud, made in U.S.A., sorry. Our government right now says, the Fair Labor Standards Act says, you don't get that option, but if you work for the Federal Government then you would, and that is just not fair.

So I applaud you for drafting this bill so that every American family would have the option to be able to spend time with those people that mean the most to them. It is just common sense. The time has well passed for us to pass this.

I just commend you for putting this forth again. I am very excited about this bill, proud to stand alongside you and look forward to what I believe should be—should be—a unanimous vote tomorrow because this is such a great bill.

So thank you so much for allowing me to come down and to share my support, and the people of the Fourth District of Missouri would just love to have this. Keep up the great work. We will look forward to bringing this across the finish line.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman and all of her comments and her support as a working mom who understands all of the pushes and pulls that so many American families face.

I want to spend a little bit of time, while I have the opportunity, to talk about some of the myths about the Working Families Flexibility Act. There is so much misinformation, false information that is out there about this bill.

Trust me, we are on social media responding to the information that is being put out there that is incorrect because we want to make sure people understand. This bill is not intended to hurt people. It is intended to help people and offer a much-needed benefit to provide people flexibility in the workforce.

The first myth I want to address is that this will result in employees working longer hours for less pay. The fact is that the Working Families Flexibility Act safeguards workers' time and wages. Receiving paid time off or compensatory time for working overtime hours under this bill is completely voluntary. An employee who prefers to receive cash payments for overtime hours worked is always free to do so.

Employers and employees are required to complete a written comp time agreement, a voluntary written agreement, and an employee can withdraw from this agreement at any time and receive cash wages for accrued comp time.

Comp time is accrued at the same rate as overtime cash wages, so employees who work more than the 40-hour week will accrue paid time off at a rate time and a half for the overtime hours worked. Workers can cash out—meaning, say “I want the money instead of the time”—whenever they choose, and employers are required to provide those cash wages that that employee has accrued within 30 days of receiving that employee’s request.

Another myth is that the Working Families Flexibility Act will allow employers to control when workers use their comp time. The fact is that the Working Families Flexibility Act protects employees’ use of the compensatory time that they have earned. The Working Families Flexibility Act allows workers to use their comp time whenever they choose as long as they provide reasonable notice and the leave is not overly disruptive.

The unduly disrupt provision included in H.R. 1180, the Working Families Flexibility Act, is the same standard used today for public employees who are using this benefit to receive comp time, and this has worked for over 30 years. As my colleagues have already stated, this is a matter of fairness. If it is good enough for government employees, it should be good enough for private sector employees as well.

All existing labor enforcement remedies, including action by the Department of Labor, are available if a worker believes he or she has been unfairly treated. I can’t put enough emphasis on this, that the anticoercion, the anti-intimidation provisions that are currently a part of the law, of course, apply to the Working Families Flexibility Act. And it even promotes greater workplace flexibility while protecting the needs of the employer, but the employee is very protected from that type of behavior and coercion by the employer.

I have some other myths and facts that I am going to go over, but I see that the chairwoman of the Education and the Workforce Committee has joined us. I really appreciate the gentlewoman, the chairwoman, and all the work that she has done to support the working Families Flexibility Act.

I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX).

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman ROBY for leading this Special Order, but a special thanks to you for introducing H.R. 1180, the Working Families Flexibility Act of 2017. Everyone in the private sector, men and women, are grateful to you for doing this.

I may repeat some of the things that some of my colleagues have already said, but, Mr. Speaker, they bear repeating.

This proposal, this bill, is about freedom, flexibility, and fairness. Workers, not the Federal Government, should have the freedom to choose what is best for them and their families. Hard-

working men and women need more flexibility to balance work, life, and family, and there should be fair work-force policies that don’t put private sector employees at a disadvantage to those in the public sector.

Across the country, there are moms and dads who wish they had more flexibility to make their child’s baseball game or dance recital, students who can’t find enough time to study for college finals while working full time, and individuals who are struggling to care for an aging relative. There are many workers who want flexible work arrangements instead of rigid 9 to 5 schedules so they can attend to their personal needs.

This bill will improve the quality of life of many Americans by offering workers eligible for overtime pay a choice between paid time off and cash wages. Outdated Federal labor rules currently prohibit private sector workers from exercising this choice.

More than 30 years ago, Republicans and Democrats amended the law to give public sector workers the option of comp time. This was a positive step, but it created double standards. It is time to ease this double standard by leveling the playing field between private sector employees and government workers when it comes to workplace flexibility. That is exactly what this bill does. It is a commonsense idea that should receive the support of workers on both sides of the aisle.

As my colleague from Alabama said, the decision to choose comp time is completely voluntary and requires a written agreement between the worker and employer. Those who want to continue receiving cash wages as overtime pay are always free to do so. It also explicitly prohibits employers from coercing workers into electing comp time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is, again, about fairness, and it is so difficult for me to understand how Democrats would be opposed to that. We should have the same rules in the private sector as we do in the public sector. I think that Democrats have run out of excuses not to provide workers this choice. All we are doing here is giving a choice.

No one, Republican nor Democrat, should think they know what is best for individual workers and their families.

Mr. Speaker, when we vote on this bill this week, I hope all of our colleagues will come to their senses and see that they are discriminating against the private sector by denying them the opportunity to take their overtime as comp time and that they will vote with us.

Again, I thank my colleague from Alabama for her leadership on this Special Order, but particularly her willingness to introduce this bill and take the lead in promoting it.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairwoman, and again, I appreciate her leadership for moving this bill through committee and for getting it

ready through the Rules Committee so that we can be here on the floor tomorrow. Again, I appreciate her leadership on this and many, many other issues that she does on a daily basis to fight for Americans, in this case, Americans that are subject to the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act that would benefit from this amendment in the private sector.

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I want to go back. I have two more myths that I would like to address.

Here is the myth: the Working Families Flexibility Act will allow employers to force workers to take comp time instead of cash payments for overtime.

The fact is that the Working Families Flexibility Act prohibits worker coercion. The decision to use compensatory time is completely voluntary. An employee who prefers to receive cash payments for overtime hours worked is always free to do that. It explicitly prohibits an employer from directly or indirectly intimidating, threatening, or coercing; or attempting to intimidate, threaten, or coerce an employee into taking or not taking compensatory time.

An employer who violates these anticoercion provisions will be liable to the affected employee for double damages which includes both the amount of the comp time and an equal amount in cash wages.

In addition to new provisions prohibiting coercion, H.R. 1180 ensures all existing enforcement remedies, including action by the Department of Labor, and are available to workers if an employer fails to pay cash wages for the overtime hours worked.

Myth: this bill is unnecessary because current law already allows for workplace flexibility. The fact is that the Working Families Flexibility Act empowers workers with more options. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, private sector employees may only use paid time off during the same paid period in which it is accrued. Paid time off cannot be saved by the employee for future use outside of that pay period.

The law currently allows public sector employees to accrue comp time to be used at their discretion so long as reasonable notice is given and the leave does not unduly disrupt the workplace.

My amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Working Families Flexibility Act, H.R. 1180, provides private sector employees with comp time benefits similar to what is already available in the public sector.

Here is how it works: an hourly wage employee would be able to voluntarily enter into an agreement with their employer to put all of some of their accrued overtime towards paid time off instead of cash wages. A working dad could use the time-and-a-half overtime he has earned to take a paid hour and a half off of work. No employee, again, could ever be forced to take the paid

time off, just like no business would be forced to offer this benefit.

Upon introducing this bill 4 years ago, I heard from a very special lady named Karen DeLoach. She worked as a bookkeeper in an accounting firm of my hometown, Montgomery, Alabama. Like most in her line of work, Karen would put in many hours during the busy season and build up a lot of overtime. Karen once approached her boss and said: Well, can I accrue my overtime to use as paid leave rather than taking the cash payments? Because, see, Karen gave her time to serve on a mission trip in Nicaragua every summer, and she wanted to do so and go on her church's mission trip without interrupting her regular paycheck.

Montgomery, Alabama, is the State capital, and Karen had heard her State employee friends talk about how they swapped their overtime pay for comp time in their jobs. She never imagined that a similar arrangement at the private business at which she worked would be against the law, but that is what her boss informed her. He wanted to give it to her, but he couldn't under the law. To his credit, he wanted to offer it to her, but he wasn't about to break the law.

Karen's story isn't unique. As I have already referenced, just think of all the parents in this country with young kids or caring for elderly parents or a military family with one or both of the parents deployed or about to deploy. They need time to get ready to take care of their responsibilities.

So the Working Families Flexibility Act is not going to end or solve the debt crisis or fix ObamaCare or simplify the Tax Code. I am proud of our ongoing efforts here in Congress to repeal and replace ObamaCare, to put forth a tax policy that is fair, flatter, and simpler, and to continue to cut out wasteful spending. This bill doesn't solve those problems.

But the fact that we can't solve those problems overnight shouldn't stop us here in the House of Representatives from doing what we can do right now to help make life a little easier for working moms and dads. That is what the Working Families Flexibility Act does, helping Americans better balance the demands of family and work.

I want to thank all those Members who have come here to the floor tonight to speak on this bill. As a working mom myself, I certainly understand all too well how challenging it can be to balance our responsibilities.

Again, I have sponsored this bill this Congress, of course, and the past two before that. I have heard criticism from labor unions and their allies saying that this bill is somehow antiunion or antiworker. This is just simply untrue.

Of course, many in Big Labor will reflexively attack any proposal that would change a single word of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Ironically here, labor unions, see, they oppose this, but they themselves can and often do nego-

tiate similar agreements for their members already.

That seems a bit unfair. So it is okay for those who are members of unions to negotiate similar compensatory time arrangements, it is okay for those who work in the public sector under the law to utilize compensatory time, but it is just not good enough for the hourly wage employee in the private sector. That is more than unfair.

The legislation is completely voluntary for both the employer and the employee. It does not affect the 40-hour workweek or change the way overtime is calculated. It strengthens provisions for workers and increases penalties for abuse. It contains strong anticoercion provisions that would prohibit an employer from directly or indirectly trying to intimidate or coerce workers into taking comp time.

Workers have the option under the Working Families Flexibility Act to cash out at any time. If for some reason this agreement, this voluntary agreement, just isn't working out, an employee can always take the cash, no questions asked.

And, finally, for workers represented by a labor union, any comp time arrangement would have to be negotiated under this bill as part of the collective bargaining agreement, just as they already do.

Mr. Speaker, as I finish tonight, I just want to say again, as a mom, a working mom, a family where both parents work outside of the home, I certainly understand for some of us the time, our time, the time that has been accrued by an hourly wage employee, is more important than the cash wages. That may not be true for everybody. That remains in that the employee can determine what he or she wants to do with their time.

Again, I am grateful for the many people who have worked so hard on this bill over the years. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent Alabama's Second District and to represent so many hardworking American families here tonight in this hour.

I look forward to the debate tomorrow here on the floor on this bill. I would urge all of my colleagues to please vote in favor of H.R. 1180, the Working Families Flexibility Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WEEK AND SUCCESS ACADEMY

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate National Charter Schools Week, I want to highlight my recent visit to Success Academy Harlem 1, which is 1 of 41 charter schools in the largest and highest performing public charter school network in New York City.

Success Academy current serves 14,000 students and has more than 16,000

families on its wait list. Founded in 2006, Harlem 1 is Success Academy's first school, and founder Eva Moskowitz served as its first principal.

With a focus on developing the whole child, Success Academy aims to make its schools joyful places of learning. I am here to tell you that these schools are getting results, and they are joyful.

Five of the top five schools in the State of New York in math and two of the top five schools in English are Success Academy schools.

Every student in every school deserves an excellent education, but unfortunately we are falling far short of that goal as a nation. Thankfully, innovative charter schools like Success Academy Harlem 1 are providing thousands of families with new hope and opportunity.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY AND ITS IMPACT ON MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to coanchor this CBC Special Order hour with my esteemed colleague from Texas (Mr. VEASEY). For the next 60 minutes, we have a chance to speak directly to the American people on issues of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus, Congress, the constituents we represent, and all Americans.

This evening, the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. RICHMOND), my friend and colleague, I first thank him for his continued leadership of the caucus and on issues impacting Black America and other minority communities across this great Nation.

I would also like to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY), my colleague, for joining me in chairing this evening's Special Order hour, and my other CBC colleagues who are joining us to speak on important issues.

Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to address the first 100 days of the Trump Presidency and its impact on minority communities like the district I represent and those of my fellow CBC colleagues. Specifically, we will highlight 100 actions taken by this administration in the last 100 days with less than positive impact to the communities we represent.

The President hails his first 100 days as the most successful in the history of the United States. These actions, however, do not spell success for low income and minority communities. Actions that, in turn, roll back Department of Justice protections designed to ensure police accountability; actions that threaten to further restrict voting rights and undermine the public education system; actions that threaten