TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

NEWSLETTER -- VOL. 5, ISSUE 2

"Time is wealth."

-- Mahatma Gandhi

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ED OUTLINES NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT TBYT

Are you overdue for a quality vacation with family or friends? Does your company have a policy that limits time-off to a few days at a time? Have you ever given back your earned leave because you realized that there was a threat that you would be replaced or demoted for taking the time off?

Take Back Your Time is making a stand! We are taking the lead and we need your help! We are already 10,000 strong and growing. If we all work together, we will be able to push a positive legislative agenda.

Are you in a position to help? We will be developing volunteer kits for you to download from our website. The kits will be loaded with helpful tools. For example, you will find fact sheets, so that you can write to your legislators and editorial boards. There will be posters to print and post. I am also hoping for you to be able to connect with other members -- either online or in person. Please email me at **Lisa@timeday.org** if you would like to volunteer.

Take Back Your Time is funded primarily by small contributions from individual donors. Many good people make a monthly contribution of $20 or even $50. Won't you please lend your financial support? We are counting on you! To make a contribution visit **https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=2365**.

Together we are a force for change. It will be a pleasure to work with you!

Lisa Stuebing
Executive Director, Take Back Your Time

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TAKE BACK YOUR TIME' LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR VACATION LAW -- LEADERS HOPE TO MAKE THE ISSUE PART OF THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Seattle, Washington, May 1, 2007: The *Take Back Your Time* campaign called today for members of Congress to enact national legislation guaranteeing at least three weeks of paid vacation for all American workers. They pointed to statistics showing that vacation time is of proven benefit to employers and employees, but is being reduced or eliminated by many American companies. The United States is the only industrial nation that fails to legally protect its citizens' vacations.

American workers receive the least vacation time among wealthy industrial nations. *Take Back Your Time* (www.timeday.org), a national organization with about 10,000 members that also supports paid childbirth and sick leave legislation, has decided to make the campaign for a national vacation law its top priority for 2007-2008.

"What we're asking for is quite modest when you consider that residents of most industrial countries get five or six weeks off and that the absolute minimum in Europe is twenty days of paid vacation after the first year on the job," said *Take Back Your Time's* Executive Director Lisa Stuebing."

"*Take Back Your Time* calls on every member of Congress to stand up for Americans' health, family life and happiness, by making sure that all Americans are given the benefits of paid time off from work," declared *Take Back Your Time's* national coordinator, John de Graaf.

"Together, we can put together a movement that makes this issue part of the discussion in the 2008 presidential campaigns," added Jerome Segal of the University of Maryland. "I think any presidential candidate who gets out front on this will find a huge reservoir of public support."

AMERICA NEEDS A BREAK

"America needs a break," said Joe Robinson, author of *Work to Live* and founder of the *Work to Live* Vacation Campaign, "Job stress and burnout are epidemic. People are caught in this vise grip of spiraling workweeks and shrinking vacations. The average vacation in the U.S. is now only a long weekend. President Bush knows the value of vacation time. He enjoys his trips to his ranch. He ought to be the first to step up and say, 'Send me this bill and I'll sign it.'"

Robinson pointed out that vacations in the U.S. are vanishing. Last year, 25 percent of American workers got no paid vacation at all, while 43% didn't even take a solid week off. "Many employees in a climate of job insecurity are afraid to take their vacations for fear they'll be seen as slackers, something the lack of statutory validation for vacations fosters" adds Robinson. "Because there's no legal validation or protection for vacations, vacations are seen as not legitimate, somehow illicit."

Back in 2002, Robinson brought 50,000 signatures from Americans supporting a paid vacation bill to Congress. "This is not about slacking, not about being lazy," Robinson added. "Vacations are as important to your health as checking your cholesterol or getting exercise. They're the antidote to runaway stress. Research shows that an annual vacation can cut the risk of death from heart disease in women by 50% and in men by 32%. Vacations can also cure burnout, the last stage of chronic stress -- but it takes two weeks for the process of re-gathering crashed emotional resources to occur."

BUSINESS WILL BENEFIT FROM A VACATION LAW

Business also gets a big dividend from vacations. "Three week vacations have proven to be a boost to productivity and profits at enlightened American firms with that policy. Performance goes up when people come back from a vacation," said Robinson. "In the knowledge economy, the source of true productivity is a refreshed and energized mind."

Companies that have implemented three-week vacation policies have found it a win-win for employees and sales. At the H Group, a financial services firm in Salem, Oregon, profits have doubled since it adopted a three-week policy. At Jancoa, a cleaning services company in Cincinnati, sales increased 15 percent, a staff turnover problem was eliminated, and performance improved so much that the company was able to get rid of overtime.

"Unfortunately, most employers have been reducing time off in the interest of short-run profits," Robinson says. "That's why we need a law, like the 127 other countries in the world that have one."

LOSING VACATION TIME

Compared to 1970, a third fewer American families take vacations together. Professor William Doherty, a family studies expert at the University of Minnesota, says many adults remember childhood family vacations as the happiest times in their lives, a time when their families really bonded together. "But the family vacation, a couple of leisurely weeks spent camping, for example, is really disappearing," Doherty said, "and our families are suffering from the loss." Two other organizations, *Work to Live* and the *Adventure Travel Trade Association* have joined the campaign. "We're a dedicated group, but we're small," added Cecile Andrews, the author of *Slow is Beautiful*. "We can't do this on our own, so we're looking for partners on this campaign, groups like the AMA, the Sierra Club, travel companies, health providers, labor unions, enlightened businesses -- there's really something in this for everyone."

"We really need this" argued Shauna South, who has signed on as Take Back Your Time's vacation campaign volunteer coordinator in Utah. "There's so much stress out there."

"We need to ask a simple question: What's the Economy for, anyway?" said John de Graaf. "Is it just about the Gross Domestic Product or is it to help us lead happy, healthy and sustainable lives? If it's the latter, then vacations are essential. There's no present like the time."

TO SPEAK WITH ANY OF THE PEOPLE MENTIONED IN THIS PRESS RELEASE, PLEASE CONTACT LISA STUEBING AT: 206-524-6788 (Seattle) / **lisa@timeday.org**.

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THE CASE FOR VACATION LEGISLATION

By Joe Robinson

In 127 countries on this planet you are not considered a slacker or suspect career promotion material if you take a vacation. That's because in all those countries, from Brazil to Holland to Japan, vacations actually have statutory validation. They're legal. They're not in the U.S., which is the only major industrial nation without a minimum paid leave law.

Vacations in the U.S. are up to employers, who can provide no leave if they want to, and increasingly do. One-third of American women get no vacation leave benefits anymore, a quarter of men, according to an AFL-CIO survey. Vacations are becoming an endangered species, often existing only on paper for those who still have policies at their companies. Only 14% of Americans take a holiday of two weeks or more. The standard vacation is now a long weekend.

It's urgent that we protect American vacations with a minimum paid-leave law before they vanish altogether. Our proposal would provide a mandated three weeks off for anyone who's worked at a job for a year. As founder of the Work to Live Campaign (**www.worktolive.info**) and author of the book on how we can be productive AND have a life, Work to Live, I'm very excited about TBYT making this initiative a major goal in 2007-2008. Minimum paid leave has broad political support, since burnout, exhaustion and family implosion know no political party.

The lack of legal vacations is seen by working men and women of all stripes as a clear injustice at a time when workweeks are getting longer and longer. In my experience, the vast majority of callers, even on conservative radio programs, support a minimum paid-leave law. We believe that it could be a potent factor in the '08 presidential election. Legend has it that Francois Mitterand, a perennial losing candidate, finally won the presidency of France when he promised voters a fifth week of vacation at the 11th hour of his winning campaign.

This is a true family values issue. Vacations provide the quality family time missing from our usual 24/7 schedules. Vacations are also about an issue near and dear to all Americans: freedom. The time you spend on holiday is the free-est you're going to get all year. No one should have to feel guilty about exercising freedom in the land of the free, but the lack of legal validation makes vacations feel illegit . We can change that, and we have to, because the nation is paying a high price in medical costs, lost productivity, and absentee lives for our lack of a vacation policy.

I was on a call-in radio show in Wisconsin recently, and a doctor called in to offer her support. She said 90% of her patients had wasted adrenal glands. That means 9 out of 10 patients were suffering from stress chronic enough that it had almost completely taken down their adrenal systems. The connection between job stress and adrenal and many other ailments, including heart disease, is well-documented. So is the answer: time off to break up the stressor.

Research has shown that an annual vacation can cut the risk of heart disease in men by 32% and 50% in women. Vacations can cure burnout, the last stage of chronic stress, but it takes two weeks for that process of regathering crashed emotional resources to occur. That's why we need real time for a holiday. You don't get the recuperative benefits otherwise. We won't get that time without legislation.

One of the big reasons we need a vacation law is that the current voluntary accrual system is obsolete. In a volatile job market, few are at jobs long enough to get the vacation time that comes with long tenure. With downsizing, mergers and cutbacks, those who are laid off wind up losing accrued time. People in their 50s wind up starting their vacation banks all over again as if they were at their first job. It's a scandal after a lifetime of hard work.

So I urge you to press the campaigns of the presidential candidates on minimum paid leave -- where do they stand? Help us find organizations and companies who can join our cause -- environmental organizations, travel companies, companies that stand to gain from more leisure time, from outdoor clothing firms to Starbucks.

Rally your friends, family and media outlets to help Americans obtain a right that the citizens of a vast majority of the world have, the right to step back, breathe in some life, discover the world around them, explore, play, and experience the world of input, not just output.

Joe Robinson is a TBYT Board Member, founder of the Work to Live Vacation Campaign, **www.worktolive.info**.

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MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Many readers will no doubt remember Jim Jontz, a tireless activist both for environmentalism and working families. Read more about Jim at **www.adaction.org/jontz.htm**.

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IN THE NEWS

May 16, 2007
New Study Supports Take Back Your Time's Call For A Paid Vacation Law
A new study, released on May 16th by the Center for Economic and Policy Research confirms that the United States is the only industrial nation that does not guarantee paid vacation time for its workers. A link to the full report can be found at: **http://www.cepr.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1184&Itemid=8**

May 8, 2007
Washington Becomes Second State To Pass Paid Family Leave
Paid childbirth leave is one of six points on TAKE BACK YOUR TIME's Time to Care Agenda. We are thrilled to report a new victory for such leave. On May 8th, Washington governor Chris Gregoire (see photo) signed a bill making Washington the second state in the US to provide paid leave for parents in the case of childbirth or adoption (California was the first). The bill, which provides five weeks of paid leave, and excludes employees of companies with fewer than 25 workers, was passed on the last day of the legislative session. While TAKE BACK YOUR TIME strongly supported the bill, primary credit for its passage goes to others, including Karen Keiser and Mary Lou Dickerson, the legislators who introduced the bill, the Economic Opportunity Institute, which provided needed research and assistance in drafting the bill, and MomsRising.org, whose thousands of members in Washington state worked tirelessly on its behalf. MomsRising members decorated hundreds of baby onesies with slogans favoring family leave and put them up at the state capitol in Olympia (see photo). Oregon, New Jersey and New York legislators are now considering similar bills. TAKE BACK YOUR TIME salutes MomsRising, the Economic Opportunity Institute, and Washington legislators for making paid family leave happen in Washington State. It's a much needed step in the right direction. Let's hope federal officials take note!

April 14, 2007
What's the Rush? was the slogan for the Pace of Life Fair at the Salt Lake City Public Library on Saturday, April 14, 2007. The fair was the culmination of a year's exploration by the Honors Think Tank on Quality of Life at the University of Utah. Eleven students and two instructors considered what makes a good life -- rather than just the good life -- from the perspectives of disciplines from philosophy to business. In the fall of 2006, they read a variety of books, hosted

speakers on topics such as happiness and the experience of refugees, and made some cross-cultural and historical comparisons to better understand what quality of life means to different people.

In the spring, the group focused their attention on the sheer pace of life, recognizing that not much research had been done on the issue and that is not owned by any academic discipline. The think tank soon discovered that our increasing pace of life touches practically everyone: individuals and families, the underemployed as well as the overworked, children and adults. The fair included panels on the relationship of pace to work and commuting, health and well-being, and children and education. It was easy to recruit participants for these discussions as well as for tables representing area groups and organizations, in part because the topic hit a responsive chord with everyone we contacted. Representatives from Slow Food, mindfulness meditation, an ecological indicators project, co-housing, and public transportation were there. The keynote address, America's Time Famine: Causes, Consequences and Cures was presented by John de Graaf.

By the end of the fair, which attracted several hundred people, we heard requests for follow-up efforts. So, we're hoping that TBYT and related groups will form in Salt Lake.

March 22, 2007
Women Want Shorter Work Days: **www.livescience.com/humanbiology/070322_work_hours.html**.

February 26, 2007
Americans Hate Their Jobs More than Ever: **www.livescience.com/humanbiology/070226_hate_jobs.html**

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YOUR LETTERS

From Detroit, MI

I suggest that we ask for one month of minimum vacation preferably paid or a combination of paid and unpaid. I feel that a one month block of time is necessary to pursue international travel, reconnect with family, get involved in a project, and reconnect with one's self outside of work.

Some employers insist that the employee split up the vacation time since they don't feel they can do without the employee for more than one week. I think this block of time should not be split up.

From Massachusetts

I am a professional organizer and I often use the Take Back Your Time theme when I speak or write articles on time management. I was a pioneer in the organizing industry when I stated my business in 1983.

I have an online newsletter. The theme of my October 2006 issue was "Take Back Your Time" in recognition of Take Back Your Time Day. To see the article, I invite you to visit my website at **www.organizationplus.com**.

In October I spoke at the National Association of Women Business Owners, Boston Chapter meeting, and my topic was "Take Back Your Time". I explained the origin of Take Back Your Time Day and gave examples of how women business owners could take back their time, and create practices in their business to enable their employees to do the same.

From Seattle, WA

I think everyone should be entitled to 6 weeks off just like our European counterparts. However, since that is something this country has never had, I don't see it happening. So my opinion is that everyone should be entitled to 3 weeks paid vacation. And on top of that they should be allowed an optional 1 week without pay. The 3 weeks should be an immediate benefit when a person starts with the company. Then after a reasonable amount of time, maybe 5 years, they would increase to 4 weeks paid vacation, still having the option of 1 week unpaid. Then as the person continues working for the company, they should be able to increase their vacation to at least 6 weeks within a reasonable amount of time.

Also, any vacation laws should not affect any sick leave policies. For example, if a company is now required by law to offer 3 weeks paid vacation, they should not be allowed to reduce the number of paid sick days.

From Ohio

I just heard about this movement on a radio show and think it is a wonderful thing. Americans don't take vacations and even when they do they aren't totally on vacation. My company has vacation time; however many of our employees are supposed to be in constant contact with their blackberries, phones and lap tops with them at all times to answer e-mails etc. So in reality there is no vacation.

There are those managers that are workaholics thus believing all their employees should be workaholics thereby [causing] employees [to be[afraid to take vacation. With insurance costs rising and coverage shrinking, I would think that companies would look into vacations as a way to cut back on medical expenses. I know companies who are spending a lot of money building health facilities and making their employees lose weight, quit smoking etc., but I wonder if they are looking into what vacations will do for the health and well being of their employees. I do hope this gets on agendas in the 2008 campaign. I really think Americans need help in this area.

With companies setting goals to reduce the budget , instead of cutting back on spending, traveling, and or anything else companies just lay off employees. The days of employees being loyal to the company they work for or for that matter companies being loyal to their employees are gone. Americans are stressed about their jobs, health benefits etc. Mandatory vacations would be a nice idea.

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