



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

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NEWSLETTER - March 2008

"[Our gross national product] measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

--Robert F. Kennedy

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BREAKING NEWS

NEW JERSEY SENATE PASSES FAMILY LEAVE BILL!

On March 3rd, the New Jersey State Senate passed a paid family leave bill 22-16. The bill now goes to the House which is also expected to pass it. Governor Jon Corzine has said he will sign the bill, which provides for 6 weeks of paid family leave at up to about \$500 per week. New Jersey will then become the third state, after California and Washington, to pass a paid family leave bill. Congratulations to all of you in New Jersey who worked to make that happen! [Read more...](#)

To keep things in perspective, our neighbor to the north, Canada provides a full year of paid family leave at 55% of salary to all workers. Take Back Your Time has called for a national paid family leave bill. Our friends at MomsRising.org, which, like Take Back Your Time, is part of the Take Care Net coalition is calling on everyone to email presidential candidates, urging them to support a national paid family leave bill. For details...

http://www.momsrising.org/email_the_candidates

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME BOARD MEMBER TESTIFIES AT SENATE GDP HEARINGS

On March 12th, Jonathan Rowe, a member of Take Back Your Time's board of directors testified at a Senate committee hearing examining problems with using the Gross Domestic Product as a measure of the health of our economy. Jon was a co-founder of Redefining Progress, an organization looking for alternatives to GDP. Congratulations for your great work, Jon!

And speaking of the GDP, You-Tube has a wonderful short video of Senator Robert Kennedy's famous Gross National Product speech of 1968:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e51JnJPPY0E>

As we all know well, free time is not counted in GDP statistics. The time you spend taking care of loved ones or doing anything enjoyable that you don't pay someone for is simply wasted time as far as the GDP is concerned. There's got to be a better way!

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - JOHN DE GRAAF

Dear Take Back Your Time Supporters:

It may be that our concerns will soon be taken up with a bit more energy at the national level. The Democratic Party's presidential candidates have both spoken up strongly for such goals as paid family leave and the Healthy Families Act, providing paid sick days for all workers (now we hope they'll take up our call for a paid vacation law). In Barack Obama's case, he seems to be being pushed toward championing work-life balance by his wife Michelle. A recent profile of Michelle Obama by Lauren Collins in *The New Yorker*

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/03/10/080310fa_fact_collins

had this to say about the would-be first lady:

Parenthood, far more than politics, has been the catalytic force in Michelle's adult life. She is passionate about being a mother, and about confronting the problems that working women face in making time for both their families and their professions. When I asked if there was an issue she has worked particularly hard to bring to her husband's attention, she replied, "The attention that he's focussed on work-family balance. . . . That is our life. To the extent that we have challenges, and struggles, headaches that everybody else is going through . . . those are our conversations." (Barack has candidly chronicled their struggle "to balance work and family in a way that's equitable to Michelle and good for our children," and its toll on their marriage.)

As a non-partisan organization, we hope John McCain will take up the cause as well.

LET'S CREATE A NATIONAL "VACATION MATTERS" SUMMIT FOR 2009!

Recently, I had another conversation with a key staffer for a US Senator who has expressed strong interest in introducing paid vacation legislation along the line we support as an organization. He told me his boss was still committed to doing so but wanted to wait until 2009 when there wouldn't be quite so many things going on and when a new Congress and President might be more sympathetic to the cause. I was disappointed because I wanted to give our members something concrete—a bill in Congress—to start mobilizing around, even if it wouldn't be voted on till next year. I have also been exploring the possibility of a referendum or initiative for paid vacations in the county—King County, Washington—where I live. But in this case too, it appears 2009, not 2008, will be the year.

In the meantime, I'd like to propose that TAKE BACK YOUR TIME begin organizing a major national conference called *The Vacation Matters Summit*, to bring together organizations and people from around the country who believe Americans need more vacation time to begin to put the issue in the national spotlight and win the attention of the next Congress and President. I hope that many of you reading this letter will want to join in the planning for this epic event, which I envision taking place in Washington DC in the spring of 2009 (though we're open to all suggestions!). I believe we can attract well-known national speakers, financial support from the tourist, travel and health industries, and broad support from labor, family, health, environmental (especially eco-tourism, but also groups like the Sierra Club, which grow from a membership with the time to enjoy nature) and other organizations.

I see this summit as making the case for more vacation and offering various ways of doing that, from changing corporate culture to legislation like that which Take Back Your Time supports. Joe Robinson has suggested that we find time at the conference to honor companies that really do give workers adequate time off. I also hope we can attract speakers from other countries to make clear how deprived we in the US actually are in this area of life. I am certain this summit will attract considerable media attention. I also believe we will attract some members of Congress as speakers. Please email me at jodg@comcast.net if you want to be part of planning this event.

FILM "THE GREAT VACATION SQUEEZE"

I also want to let you know that I am currently developing a documentary film, tentatively titled THE GREAT VACATION SQUEEZE. I am looking for stories of people who have not been able to take vacations for a long time and are willing to tell their stories for public television. If you have a story to tell and are interested in being part of this film, please contact me at jodg@comcast.net. I'll be happy to provide more information. I hope we will be able to show a portion of the film at the Vacation Matters Summit.

In my role as Interim Executive Director, I am working with our board to develop other new plans for the organization, including a speakers' bureau, which we hope to have up and running by May. As always, we appreciate your support and I want to thank all of you who contributed recently to Take Back Your Time. You are making a difference and making us stronger. If you haven't contributed, please consider doing so! Thanks so much!

Leisurely yours,

John de Graaf



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR - KELLEY SMITH

My beloved state of Oklahoma, along with many others, has suffered in the last few weeks due to the severe flu and pneumonia epidemic. Our local newspaper ran a story on their website (sorry, the story has been removed from the site) about the impacts on our state health care system. More interesting, however, were comments about the story posted by readers. Some individuals had lost jobs due to long bouts of flu or pneumonia. A mother feared losing her job because of her children's lengthy illnesses. Others were devastated because their sick leave was unpaid, and they were barely above the poverty line before they became ill.

In other words, no one had *time* to be sick! And many were torn between work responsibilities and the need to care for loved ones who were ill. There were comments about the need for a law to mandate paid sick leave, or at least partial pay along with job guarantees. And, at the time I viewed the website, there was not one single comment about the impossibility of these ideas. No one wrote to say that all businesses would immediately close up shop and move to Arkansas, Mexico, or Sri Lanka if they were required to provide sick pay. No letters claimed that commerce as we know it would cease to exist amid a flood of business bankruptcies.

Sometimes trying circumstances move us to a different point of view. Paid sick leave and vacation are often seen as ridiculous luxuries, completely unnecessary for employees who have a decent sense of work ethic. In the midst of this bleak winter though, many of us realized that the work of caring for children or elderly parents, or the work of recovering from illness ourselves was *real work*. That work demands time and some sacrifices.

Of course, when we are back on our feet, we will begin feeling normal again and we will forget this winter and its dreariness. We will go back to bragging about how many hours of overtime we are working. I just wish I had snapped a picture of that web page!

Yours to good health,

Kelley Smith

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CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE TAKE BACK YOUR TIME BOARD

From Board Member Anmarie Widener

(this is a shortened version of a lengthy position paper which can be accessed at:

<http://www.lmi.org/LRI/ReportsAndArticles.aspx> -- then request a copy by email from the director)

IT'S ABOUT *TIME*:

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL LEAVE ON CHILD HEALTH

Anmarie J. Widener, MSW, Ph.D.
LMI Research Institute
2000 Corporate Ridge
McLean, VA 22102
awidener@lmi.org

Three demographic shifts have contributed to the need for work/family policies. The first is the large increase in the rates of women, especially mothers, joining the labor force. The second is the increasing numbers of elderly needing care and the increased rate at which this care is provided by families. And third is the increasing numbers of single parent families, now comprising over 1/3 of families in the U.S. Today, fewer than 1/3 of children have a parent at home full-time. A fourth but less discussed reason is the increasing number of men participating in care giving, although the impact of men giving care is still relatively small in the U.S.

Despite the dramatic change in how our society structures family and work, many working parents continue to lack paid leave. In fact, 70% of private sector employees in the U.S. are not entitled to paid sick days to care for a sick child or other family member. Even worse, 77% of low-income families and 48% of all private sector employees have no paid sick days at all. This is a serious health issue. This makes it nearly impossible to maintain employment while also caring for ill family members or one's own illness. We know that parents without paid leave are less likely to take their child or themselves to a doctor when sick (Heymann, 2006; Heymann, Toomey, & Furstenberg, 1999). When they do, many lose their jobs (Earle & Heymann, 2002). In fact, one of the leading causes of job loss is taking care of children's health.

In 2007, an estimated \$28.4 billion in lost productivity was due to job turnover, going to work sick and spreading illness, and present but not productive employees due to the employees' own illness and stress (presenteeism). [1](#)

Due to serious national attention on health issues consistent with all three major presidential candidates' reform agenda, we now have an opportunity to create an integrated system of health policy. The three major factors people are looking at in order to reign in costs while increasing access and quality of healthcare are health IT, prevention, and the management of chronic conditions. The latter two depend on people having the *time* to take care of themselves and their families while maintaining employment. Having a health insurance card in your pocket does not automatically lead to timely health care. Universal healthcare coverage is not a stand alone policy. A more integrated health system would consider not only decreasing costs and increasing health insurance coverage, but also increasing an individual's ability to receive care when ill. Finally, a true cost-cutting mechanism emphasizes prevention which means making time to care for healthy family members, before acute illness occurs. It's about *time*.

Encouraging families to take preventative care seriously, to manage their chronic diseases well, and to ensure their children are growing in safe and healthy environments only pays lip service to healthcare reform unless, that is, families are given the means and the time to do them.

Parental time to care is needed when children are sick. Take the following facts:

- Rules require sick children to be kept out of school and daycares.
- When schools or day cares close (for example, due to weather or a school in-service), parental time to care is necessary.
- The emerging epidemic of childhood obesity may be attributable, in part, to the reliance by overworked parents on more processed, ready-prepared foods as compared to home cook meals.
- Unsupervised children are twice as likely to incur injury, yet we have 40,000 kindergartners and 14 million school aged children home alone, unsupervised, for some part of the day after children are out of school but before their parent(s) are home from work.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 12 months of breastfeeding after childbirth. This demands a 'surge' of parental time.

Paid maternity and parental leave policies can provide this time.

[\(read more...\)](#)

From board member Judith Stadtman-Tucker

AMERICAN TIME USE SURVEY UNDER THREAT OF BUDGET CUTS

U.S. President George W. Bush signed the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act at the end of last year which, among other things, will lead to the cancellation of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). More details of the implications of this legislation can be found at: <http://www.bls.gov/bls/budgetimpact.htm>

Senior time use colleagues in the USA are co-ordinating a campaign to save the ATUS. Details of this campaign are at: <http://www.saveatus.org/>. This campaign has produced a letter calling for the restoration of the ATUS. There is one minor hitch with the site, in that at the moment you have to declare yourself as associated with a particular state in the

USA. If you live in the USA or have an affiliation with a state, I would encourage you to consider signing this letter as soon as possible. Non-USA colleagues may wish to wait a few days until the options on this final field get modified before signing.

If you can help, please forward information on this campaign to as many people as possible - the more signatures on the letter, the more weight the campaign will hold.

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HAPPENINGS

HELP THE HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT MAKE IT THROUGH CONGRESS!!!

The campaign is in full swing for the Healthy Families Act, which would provide for seven days of paid sick time for all workers. *Take Back Your Time* supports this important legislation. Find out more about the bill and what you can do at:

www.everyonegetssick.org

Thanks to the National Partnership for Women and Families, the Center for Law and Social Policy and many other organizations for their great work on this legislation!

SEATTLE GREEN FESTIVAL TO FEATURE "WHAT'S THE ECONOMY FOR, ANYWAY?" TRACK.

Take Back Your Time Executive Director John de Graaf, and board members, Anmarie Widener and Cecile Andrews will be speaking on April 12th as part of the "What's the Economy for, Anyway?" track at the Seattle Green Festival. John will speak at 11 am and Cecile and Anmarie will speak at noon. Information is at:

www.greenfestivals.org

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IN THE NEWS

An excellent article about TAKE BACK YOUR TIME's vacation campaign appeared recently in several magazines. You can read it on-line at:

<http://consciouschoice.com/2008/03/healthyliving0803.html>

YOUTUBE VIDEO MARKS 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY SPEECH DISCREDITING THE GDP

Seattle, WA – Forty years after Senator Robert F. Kennedy challenged the Gross Domestic Product as a measure of America's progress and well-being, the Glaser Progress Foundation has released a YouTube video commemorating that famous speech. The video features contemporary and historic images with the voice of Senator Kennedy delivering his comments at the University of Kansas on March 18, 1968.

[Watch the video of Kennedy's challenge](#)

Please send us your news!!

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YOUR LETTERS

From Pennsylvania:

Hello TBYT:

I've been following this organization for several years as I appreciated the grass roots effort to raise awareness of work life balance issues. Over the time I have been viewing it has become decidedly "left" in orientation, which I think is a [mistake]. All the funding in the world for programs will never affect attitudes; in fact funding just creates more jobs and bureaucracies, more frustration and more overwork. TBYT has become just another advocacy group for social programs.

From Holyoke, Massachusetts:

Whenever I see an article in the paper about obesity, drug and alcohol treatment, problems with children or community problems, I think of how time poverty contributes to the problem. One time I wrote to a drug treatment researcher who was talking about the efficacy of drug treatment. I talked about how in my job in substance abuse, and in my personal life in a 12 step program, people's availability to help others recover has declined. In fact, for convenience, many meetings have shifted to 6 p.m., so people can shoot in and out after work. No more coffee and fellowship after the meeting - a cornerstone to recovery in some respects. The researcher wrote me back and thanked me. It got me thinking that if TBYT began a media watch and contacted writers and told them how their issue related to time poverty, it could have a profound effect by putting the thoughts and viewpoints of your movement in the minds of these people.. I see things on the web and in the media on a daily basis that relate to time poverty. From issues with schools and children, the elderly, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, all the things discussed in the Take Back Your Time Handbook. And every time I think that someone should contact the people responsible for the research or who are discussing the issue and give the Take Back Your Time perspective. It would be great if the Time day website had letters available to download or use as a template for an e-mail, addressing major issues and that could be used to send to people. Well that is my idea. The more people you contact, the more likely the average guy on the street will talk about this. Because I work with the average guy on the street and when I talk about getting mandatory vacation time, they laugh. They feel like they have no power or say over their lives.

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ENDORSEMENTS

Endorsements of our *Time to Care Agenda* have been coming in at an increased clip. Thanks to the folks below who signed up recently:

Kelly Rambow; Jessica Bordner; Chad Ober; Emma Rae Healy; Elizabeth Maskell; Katie Olean; Kristen Tolson; Molly Hood; Gail Embry; Walter Demetria; Angela Bollin-Lee; Christine Muhler; Andrea Becker; Rhonda Bucek; Christopher Bell; Heather Gonyea; Kelly Van Camp; Amy Raubenholt; Jonathan Wilburn; Hillary Magee; Eric Seilo; Irelis Milhet; Aliya Simone; Bianca Jacobsen; Desha Harris; Katie Foutz; Radomir Quis; William Griffin; Greg Woods; Jan Garcia; James Wheatley; Kim Carlisle; Marcia Harding; Tara Noftsier; Francine Gausch; Braham Horwitz; Andreas Arpiarian; Connie O'Connor; Mason Costa; D Campbell; Jeremy Frost; Christine Crouch; Pamela Yates; AJ Hubbart; Amanda McCorquodale; Angela Gunn; Gregory Seager; Joanne Hunt; Wesley Stark; Mary Michaels; Vicki Goodier; Karen Couillard; Patricia Webster; Davin Lin

You can endorse our Time to Care Agenda at:

http://www.timeday.org/time_to_care_endorse.asp.

Please include your full name and where you are from. Thanks!

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BOOK REVIEW

REVIEW OF THE LEISURE ECONOMY BY LINDA NAZARETH

(Buy the book at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

By Greta Olson, student, Western Washington University

It may seem that with the ever-increasing workweek, leisure will become a distant memory for many. However, Canadian economist Linda Nazareth contends that although Americans are living in a time-crunch economy now, they soon will be living in the leisure economy. The Leisure Economy is an intriguing analysis into how leisure will create one of the biggest shifts in the North American economy in decades.

Blame it on the baby boomers! Baby boomers are responsible for the current extreme focus on work, Nazareth contends, due to the amount of competition they had when entering the job market. Since there were so many baby boomers competing for jobs, one way to stand out was by working as many hours as possible. When lay offs began in the 1970s, asking for time off seemed to be the last thing to do when trying to keep a job. As a result, working 40 hours or more began to be the norm for many jobs.

Using this as a basis, the baby boomer generation can explain how the U.S. has moved into its current time-crunch economy. In spite of this, things can change; Nazareth argues that as baby boomers begin retiring and Generations X and Y move into management positions, leisure will have a newfound precedence in the economy as never seen before. By delving into the motivations of Generations X and Y, Nazareth helps the reader understand how they significantly differ from the baby boomer generation and what effect that will have on the economy.

Yet which generation a person was born into is not the only determinant of a person's amount of leisure. Oddly enough, education also seems to be an influencing factor of how much leisure time a person will have. According to Nazareth, a person with an education of a bachelor's degree or more will have 4.3 leisure hours a day while a person with less than a high school education will have 6.3 leisure hours. Although a person with more education may be more financially well off than someone with a high school degree or less, they experience more time stress, while people of lower income households experience income stress. Can a middle ground be found? Nazareth presents some compelling arguments that give the reader hope that people will soon be able to find a compromise.

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SPECIAL FEATURES

NATURAL TIME: Hope springs eternal with a little good news and the coming of spring

By Matt Zuefle

"Despair is the too-little of responsibility, as pride is the too-much." - Wendell Berry, from What Are People For?

Hope can seem distant at times, especially with a review of the steady diet of bad news stories offered up by the major media. Falling spy satellites, earthquakes in Indonesia, economic uncertainty, \$100 a barrel oil, and a host of other sad and tragic events are to be found daily in newspapers, on the Internet—and especially—on television. Keeping viewers amped up and on the edge pays the bills for the modern infotainment industry.

While I guess it is important to keep up with all of this, there are good news stories that are important too. I have heard folks call many times for more attention in the mass media to the good and uplifting stories that are out there. As a young man, I usually found such appeals to be sweet, but helplessly naïve and corny. As an older person, I have come to believe that the search for good news is well worth the time; in fact, I think it is our responsibility.

And to be sure, there are many pieces of good news to be found, if you take the time to look and listen. Some of the best stories I've been hearing lately have to do with the rising level of discourse around my home in north Mississippi with issues related to taking better care of the environment and improving our quality of life.

All around the community there are groups meeting and working to help their neighbors, preserve remaining forests, educate about native plants, promote recycling, and care for animals. Nature walks are scheduled for upcoming weeks, as are environmental lectures and public programs about wildlife. People are getting involved, and there are good things to do every day for those who wish to participate.

More and more too, you hear friends and neighbors talking seriously about green development and sustainability, about the need for adequate park space, about the need for outdoor spaces for the play of children, and about the necessity of conserving our tree canopy in urban areas. It would seem that the interests of Audubon members, smart housing developers, suburban moms, and rural dads with a Ducks Unlimited sticker in the back window are all coming together more as we realize that we share this tiny, precious space.

"If there is truth to what the Hopi Indians believe—that snakes bring to humans the message of the hills—then the appropriate question is: what is the message?" – Lisa Couturier, from The Hopes of Snakes

But perhaps some of the best of all good news I've seen lately has been coming from the natural world itself. While that groundhog up in Pennsylvania may have predicted six more weeks of winter a few weeks back, his southern cousin over in Atlanta gave a conflicting report—an early spring.

Spring, the greatest season, brings with it new hope and the promise of warmth, and life, and joy. Friends in Georgia tell me that spring has already started to arrive there. Here in Lafayette County, we are closer to the Ohio River than we are to the Gulf of Mexico, so we may have a few weeks yet to go. But we're getting close...

The spiders are out and about, moving around the house again. I saw my first big brown recluse of the year this past week. Likewise, there have been at least four wasps awakened by the climbing sun who have been strafing me in my living room lately. Neither fiddleback spiders or red wasps are usually on my list of favorite house guests, but their stirrings reminded me that warm weather was nigh, and that alone gave sufficient cause to smile—even if I did have to show them to the door later.

There are fewer juncos in the yard and more robins lately. I saw a bluebird just yesterday, and the hawks and owls are out and about more with each passing day. The deer, raccoons, and 'possums that live in the woods around the house seem more active lately too. I'm still looking for my first speckled king snake, box turtle, and red-winged blackbird, but I'm thoroughly enjoying the expectation of seeing them any day now. The buds on a few trees are starting to swell, and there is enough daylight now to take a bike ride or a walk at the end of the work day. All of this is good news indeed, for as our days get longer and our nights shorter in the steady march through March, there is much cause for hope.

"Speak to the earth, and it will teach thee..." Job 12:8 KJV

The Bible provides us with instructions on many things. In Ecclesiastes we are reminded that God has made everything beautiful in its own time. And in the first of the two letters to the Corinthians it is affirmed that faith, hope, and charity abide, and that among these charity, or love, is the greatest. I believe this. But I think it is important for us to remember that hope is still in the top three.

This essay is an adaptation of a recent article in "Dispatches from the Ivory Trailer," Matt Zuefle's bi-weekly column in Oxford Town (Oxford, Mississippi). Matt Zuefle teaches at the University of Mississippi and can be contacted at crotaxa@hotmail.com.

EXCELLENT NPR COMMENTARY

LEAVING WORK TO WATCH THE SUNSET

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=87777150&ps=bb2&sc=emaf>

JOKES

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a medical alert about a highly contagious, potentially dangerous virus that is transmitted orally, by hand, and even electronically. This virus is called Weary Overload Recreational Killer (WORK). If you receive WORK from your boss, any of your colleagues, or anyone else via any means whatsoever - DO NOT TOUCH IT. This virus will wipe out your private life completely. If you should come into contact with WORK you should immediately leave the premises. Take two good friends to the nearest grocery store and purchase one or both of the antidotes - Work Isolating Neutralizer Extract (WINE) and Bothersome Employer Elimination Rebooter (BEER). Take the antidote repeatedly until WORK has been completely eliminated from your system. You should immediately forward this medical alert to five friends. If you do not have five friends, you have already been infected and WORK is controlling your life.