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To: Ian Bassin, Joan Lombardi, Ann O'Leary, Olivia Golden

Balancing Work and Family – Aspiration to Actuality

“Our government’s policies – many designed in the New Deal era – have not kept up with the new economy and the changing nature of people’s lives.” – 2008 Democratic National Platform

Working families – from all socio-economic classes – are the keystone of our nation’s economic prosperity and competitiveness. Yet as a nation we have failed all working families because public policy has not mirrored their needs or the world in which they now live and work.

There is an imbalance that exists for all working families that allows people to fulfill their roles as employees, but not as parents. Consequently, when we speak of work life balance it is only an aspiration. We propose that President Obama take it from aspiration to actuality.

Clearly, a new ethic of responsibility – of shared responsibility between the public and private sectors – is necessary to launch a bold, new vision for **supporting the lives of all working families so that they can continue to drive the competitiveness of American businesses** in the 21st century.

Corporate Voices for Working Families recommends that President Obama convenes within the first 100 days of his administration a White House conference that places the national spotlight on issues involving working families and our economy in a way that would move the necessary work life balance from aspiration to actuality.

By engaging cabinet members, public officials at all levels of government, business and civic leaders, President Obama would create the forum necessary to articulate a New Deal for all working families - giving them the support they critically require to be both productive workers and engaged parents.

Moreover, a White House conference speaks directly to what has been missing during years of policy debate: the essential requirement to establish a public-private collaboration and partnership that addresses the needs of all working families as they continue to drive the American economy in the 21st century.

And as a key outcome, attendees should identify and endorse the five public policy priorities that need to be addressed immediately to support and improve the lives of working families regardless of socio-economic class.

Corporate Voices for Working Families has a unique vantage point in the continuing public policy debate involving working families and the balance between work and family in all its dimensions. And we represent the collective voices of companies that are deeply concerned about **challenges facing working families and our business competitiveness** in a global economy. Our 50 partner companies



(see reverse) have a long history of creating corporate policies that are good for their employees and their families. We are in a time when we must leverage their experience and knowledge to enact public policy for all workers that mirrors the best in industry.

Without question working families live and work in a much different and much more complex society today than even a generation ago. For instance:

- Nationally, 60 percent of children below age six have all parents in the labor force.
- Couples with children work an average of 91 hours per week when their work hours are added together.
- U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that 72 percent of absenteeism is due to child care-related issues, leaving little doubt that work-life programs are critical to helping the nation's workforce and economy succeed and prosper.
- And working for pay outside the home is no longer a choice for most Americans. It's an economic necessity. Between 1982 and 2004, family median incomes increased by 23 percent in real dollars. But this growth was almost entirely the result of the presence of additional earners, with more women turning to full-time work and contributing more to the family total.

When considering public policy within the context of a new ethic of responsibility, the White House must affirm the changes that have occurred in our society and workplace that affect working families – and there must be an acknowledged shared responsibility among the business community and policymakers that working families need support and that our future economic prosperity depends on it.

Corporate Voices for Working Families on behalf of our partner companies appreciates the opportunity to present our perspective and recommendations on this critical issue facing working families and our economy. And we are prepared to provide whatever additional assistance is necessary to move forward with a bold, new initiative that would create a New Deal for 21st century working families.

Donna Klein
President and Founder
Corporate Voices for Working Families





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