



Did You Know?

A word from NTEU's President

On May 25, 2000, NTEU issued the first of what would be many calls to create a paid parental leave policy for federal employees.

Finally, 20 years later, it is the law of the land. And starting on Oct. 1, 2020, federal employees can begin taking advantage of this important benefit.

I fully recognize that an entire generation of children has grown up in the two decades we've been fighting for this benefit. But here's the point: Change — especially big, progressive change — does not happen easily or quickly.

This is without a doubt one of the most consequential workplace benefits granted to federal employees in all my years at NTEU. Giving federal employees the ability to care for their new children without the anxiety of losing paychecks is a life-changing opportunity for mothers, fathers and children.

That paid parental leave went from a relatively obscure experiment for a handful of private companies to mainstream, bipartisan, common sense policy for our nation's workforce shows just how far we've come.

It was not an easy journey.

NTEU members and leaders labored behind the scenes for years to convince members of Congress that this was an idea whose time had come. We worked alongside allies and met with skeptics. NTEU members around the country shared their personal stories about how paid parental leave would make them better parents and better employees.

Even when it felt like we weren't making progress, your voices were heard and coalitions were formed. Lawmakers listened when you told them you were committed to public service and the mission of your agency; that you didn't want to choose between your job and your family; and that you didn't want to leave for a job in the private sector, just so you could afford to stay at home with your new child.

In addition to fair pay, solid health insurance, stable pensions and flexible work schedules, this paid parental leave policy will probably do more to help the next generation make federal service a top choice in their young careers.

Many of us no longer have a need for paid parental leave. We are instead dealing with college tuition and grandchildren. But 2019 will always be remembered as the year that NTEU delivered paid parental leave for tomorrow's federal workers.

One year ago, I wrote that one of the enduring trademarks of NTEU is that we fight to leave things better. This is exactly one of those moments. The NTEU history books will mark it, just like when telework and alternative work schedules were born, as the time when our union made federal employment a little bit better for our successors.

Finally, paid parental leave is now a firm stepping stone to our ultimate goal: paid family leave, to take care of new children or anyone in the family who is critically ill. The meetings are already happening. The stories are being told. One of the largest and most powerful business organizations just came out in support of paid family leave for all working Americans.

Hopefully it won't take another 20 years.

Thank you for your dedication and long-term commitment to bring smart, pro-family policies to the nation's largest employer and giving federal employees some additional time and security when their families need them the most.

-Tony Reardon, NTEU National President

For more information about NTEU and organizing at BLM, visit www.nteu.org/organizing or email organize@nteu.org.