

## **POSITION PAPER: PAID MEDICAL LEAVE FOR EMPLOYEES**

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### **The American Supply Association Opposes Legislation to Mandate Paid Medical Leave.**

- The Healthy Families Act (S. 910), sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), would require businesses employing 15 or more workers to provide employees with at least 7 days of paid family and medical leave each year. This would radically change the current system of voluntarily provided sick leave by encouraging widespread misuse.
- Workers should be able to take time off work when they are sick, but the Healthy Families Act is not the right way to give workers this flexibility. Employers' experience with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) shows that this legislation would invite abuses that ultimately harm workers and customers. Because employers cannot discipline employees for misuse of leave:
  - Some workers have used FMLA to excuse tardiness and to skip work.
  - Co-workers face the burden of covering for shirking employees who misuse their leave.
  - Customers suffer unpredictable delays and shortcomings in service when a replacement worker cannot be found on short notice.
- In public comments submitted to the Department of Labor, one large manufacturing company reported that almost half of all their FMLA leave has been intermittent leave of a few hours at a time and that workers often use the leave to avoid discipline for showing up to work late or to take leave days after they are denied requests for vacation days. Other companies found that workers use FMLA leave to avoid working undesirable shifts or to take Mondays or Fridays off and enjoy a three-day weekend.
- Congress should not exacerbate the problem of leave abuse by requiring companies to provide *paid* family and medical leave while preventing them from disciplining employees who abuse the system. This would only encourage irresponsible employees to treat sick leave as permission to skip work whenever they want. By contrast, when companies provide sick leave voluntarily, supervisors can monitor its use and discipline employees who misuse it.

