

take unpaid leave—especially in these tough economic times. A recent study found that about 75 percent of FMLA-eligible workers did not take leave because they could not afford it—and according to the Department of Labor, only 8 percent of private employers provide paid leave. This is taking a toll on families—a report in 1999 by the President's Council of Economic Advisers found that since 1969, children have lost 22 hours per week with their parents.

The United States is nearly alone in the world in not providing some type of paid family leave. Only three other countries—Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland—fail to provide security for new parents or those caring for a loved one. The Family Leave Insurance Act would bring the United States up to date with the rest of the world and allow millions of workers to take care of their families while still being able to make ends meet.

Paid leave provides real benefits for children and families. A Harvard School of Public Health study found that the education and health of children improves substantially when parents have work flexibility and paid leave. When parents are able to act as caregivers for a sick child, hospital stays are reduced by 31 percent. Parental involvement is also associated with higher achievement in language and math, improved behavior, and lower dropout rates.

Paid leave is also a boon to businesses and workers. For workers, paid leave means employment and financial security and improved job satisfaction. For businesses, paid leave means less turnover and increased productivity. Research indicates that 98 percent of employees return to work for the same employer after taking family and medical leave.

My home state of California has led the country in providing access to paid leave (albeit only six weeks) and flexible use of sick days. This law has helped California's families and businesses. According to a Harvard study, California had a lower rate of foreclosures than other states due to income loss arising from a personal illness or the need to care for a sick household member. Despite initial protest by California's business community against the paid leave law, most employers now agree that this investment in their workers is also a wise investment for their business. The Family Leave Insurance Act builds on California's successful experience to enact a federal paid leave law.

More specifically, the bill:

Provides all workers with 12 weeks of paid leave over a 12-month period to care for a new child, provide for an ill family member (including a domestic partner or the child of a domestic partner), treat their own illness, or deal with an exigency caused by the deployment of a member of the military;

Creates a new trust fund to run the program. It is financed equally by employers and employees, who will each contribute 0.2% of employee wages;

Progressively tiers the benefits so that low wage workers (earning less than \$30,000) will receive full or near full salary replacement, middle income workers (\$30,000–\$60,000) receive 55% wage replacement, and higher earners (over \$60,000) receive 40–45%, with the benefit capped at approximately \$800 per week;

Administers the program through the Department of Labor, which will contract with

states to administer the program (similar to how the Unemployment Insurance program is run).

The FMLA has helped individuals meet their employment and family obligations without jeopardizing their job. Now—more than ever—workers' financial obligations must be provided the same security. I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor the Family Leave Insurance Act. All workers deserve the chance to care for their families and still be able to pay the bills.

#### RECOGNIZING 188TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

SPEECH OF

**HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 24, 2009*

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join with several of my colleagues this evening in celebrating the 188th anniversary of Greek Independence from the Ottoman Empire. Tonight is also a celebration of a society that represents, in a historical sense, the origins of what we call Western culture, and, in a contemporary sense, one of the staunchest defenders of Western society and values.

In celebrating this anniversary, I am reminded of comments made nearly two centuries ago, by Massachusetts Congressman Daniel Webster. Congressman Webster spoke of the noble fight that would end 400 years of rule by the Ottoman Empire.

Webster stated, 'These [Greek] people, a people of intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit, and enterprise, have been for centuries under the atrocious and unparalleled Tartarian barbarism that ever oppressed the human race.'

The world has greatly benefited from Greek civilization and owes to them the values of democracy that we hold dear. In the years since Greek Independence, Americans and Greeks have grown ever closer, bound by ties of strategic and military alliance, common values of democracy, individual freedom, human rights and close personal friendship.

Mr. Speaker, while we celebrate Greek Independence this evening, it's also important we recognize that Greeks continue to battle oppression from present day Turkey in Cyprus and that Greeks living in Turkey today continue to face discrimination.

Just as Greece gained its independence 188 years ago this month, it is now important that our nation work with the United Nations and with the government of Cyprus to once again unify the island and protect the rights of Greeks everywhere.

Over the past few years, I have become deeply concerned that our government's actions and policies towards Cyprus will make it more difficult to reunify a nation that has been broken apart for more than three decades. I was disappointed that the previous administration's U.S. Department of State opened its fly zone with the occupied part of Cyprus. I was also concerned that the State Department resumed trade with the occupied north through ports that were declared closed after the invasion in 1974. This action ignored Cyprus' domestic law, as well as international law that prohibits entering Cyprus through an illegal port in the north.

Mr. Speaker, we now have a new Administration and a new Secretary of State. I am encouraged that we can take tangible steps to solve the problems in Cyprus through reunifying the Country. I will continue to encourage Secretary Clinton to take a historic look at the Cyprus problem over the past 34 years. It's important to look at this problem through the perspective of three decades of illegal actions on the Turkish side.

As we celebrate Greek Independence and the cultural gifts that the Greek community has given to the world, I remain deeply dismayed by Turkey's continued discrimination against Greeks today in Turkey. I am glad that Secretary Clinton, on her recent visit to Turkey, discussed the issues of Ankara's refusal to recognize the Ecumenical status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch. The United States cannot let Turkey continue these abuses of religious freedoms.

The Department of State's 2008 Human Rights Report on Turkey lists a litany of abuses including systematic dismantling of property rights, limited education opportunities, and vandalism of religious properties of Greeks living in Turkey. This report shows that minorities are treated like second-class citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that the United States can reverse its prior path. We must work with the international community to ensure that one day soon, like Greece, the island of Cyprus will be unified and free. We must work to make sure that Greeks do not face discrimination in Turkey.

Tonight, I applaud the determination Greek's showed 188 years ago to overcome the Ottoman Empire, and restore democracy in the place of its birth.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO FLORENCE M. RICE ON HER 90TH BIRTHDAY

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 25, 2009*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, it is with great honor and enthusiasm that I rise to congratulate my good friend Florence Rice as she joins her family, long time friends, and the Harlem community together in celebration of her 90th Birthday. This momentous and joyous occasion is being celebrated with an extraordinary affair today at Noon in the Church of the Intercession in my beloved village of Harlem.

Florence M. Rice was born on March 22, 1919 in Buffalo, New York. She is the founder of the Harlem Consumer Education Council. During her childhood, Rice spent several years in the Colored Orphan Asylum and in several foster homes in New York. Upon completion of the eighth grade, Rice left school for work as a domestic seamstress where she became a member of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Rice spoke out against the discriminatory practices against African American and Latino workers. She participated in Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.'s 1962 congressional hearing, which probed dressmaker union's policies and after testifying, she was blacklisted.

In the 1960s, Rice founded the Harlem Consumer Education Council, waging a war