

being paid for by the employee that is taking the leave, not by the employer. It does provide for various provisions dealing with restitution of the job upon returning from the leave and recognizes, as a result of the committee amendment, that the employer, if it's unreasonable or impossible to provide for the job, does not have to provide the job upon return, and recognizes that an individual has to meet certain criteria in order to qualify for the leave. I want to again reemphasize what the issue is all about. It's about people. It's about families, about the changes in our society. It's about the ability for an individual who is an employee to have the chance to take time off unpaid, without benefits, to go home and take care of their child, to go home and take care of their own ill health, go home and take care of a mother or father who may be sick and in need of assistance. Currently, we have no protection in the law for these individuals to have leave. We do not provide for the ability of individuals across the board to be able to care for their families, to be able to care for their home responsibilities and not fear for the loss of their job. Different studies have been taken that indicate that something like 25 percent or so of businesses have formal parental leave policies. That leaves the vast majority of businesses without parental leave or family leave policies. It's been indicated that employers do provide, on occasion, on a negotiated basis for employees to have leave time. That's a wonderful position to be in if you are the employer, not so wonderful if you're the employee. There's two perspectives to look at on this issue. One, the employer; one, the employee. Employers now have the ability to choose to or not to provide for a leave, whether it be paid or unpaid. The benefit situation they have is, obviously, one they negotiate with their employees. But if they so choose to not have a leave policy, then it's up to their discretion whether or not it's granted. Looking at it from an employee perspective, faced with a sick mother or father or a sick child, going to the employer asking for the chance to take care of that family responsibility, knowing that it's at the discretion of the employer, puts them at a very serious disadvantage. And, of course, the anxiety involved is tremendous. Will they or will they not have the chance to take care of their family member? Not being sure about their rights, not having an absolute ability to meet their obligations of their family has torn many a family and individual apart. Of course, there's the need to take time off to have a child or adopt a child is also a part of the bill. We all need the value of having a young child have the ability to