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For Immediate Release

SHRM Calls for New Policy on Workplace Leave to Ensure Flexibility and Predictability for Employees and Employers

Human Resource Experts Release Principles to Guide Development of Legislation

Alexandria, Va., – May 7, 2009 – In a letter to all U.S. Senators and Representatives, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) today announced its commitment to leading all stakeholders in the debate over a 21st Century workplace flexibility policy that meets the needs of both employees and employers.

“We believe employers should be encouraged to provide the paid leave their workforces need, and let employees decide how to use it,” wrote SHRM CEO and President Laurence O’Neil. “Providing some agreed-upon amount of paid leave for workers should be considered as a way for employers to satisfy federal, state and local leave requirements.”

Congress and the Obama Administration are likely to push “paid sick leave” legislation this year because many believe current labor laws have not kept pace with the evolving needs of today’s diverse and mobile workforce.

To help frame the coming debate and guide the crafting of legislation, SHRM issued a set of principles to Congress and the Administration called “*Principles for a 21st Century Workplace Flexibility Policy*.” The principles represent a new approach to federal leave policy by encouraging employers to voluntarily provide paid leave in exchange for no longer being encumbered by complex federal rules.

“SHRM believes employers, not the government, are in the best position to know the benefit preferences of their employees,” O’Neil said. “HR professionals have decades of experience in designing and implementing programs that work for both employers and employees. We’re eager to share this expertise with policymakers and welcome a positive dialogue on a workplace flexibility policy for the 21st Century.”

Rather than an inflexible, one-size-fits-all government mandate, SHRM outlined in its letter to Congress an approach for employers to meet baseline standards to qualify for a statutorily defined “safe harbor.” Among its principles, SHRM seeks a federal policy that would:

- Encourage employers to offer uniform and coordinated paid leave;
- Create administrative and compliance incentives for employers who meet the leave standard;

- Provide certainty, predictability and accountability for employers and employees; and
- Allow for different work environments, industries and organizational size.

SHRM also today released data from a survey of 507 randomly polled HR practitioners that showed nearly nine out of 10 organizations already provide some form of paid vacation leave to their full-time employees. The survey also found that eight out of 10 respondents provide some form of sick leave. Notably, 42 percent offer paid sick leave through a paid time off (PTO) plan, which allows employees to use leave for illness, vacation or personal reasons.

“Solid benefits program makes it easier for organizations to attract and retain great employees,” O’Neil said. “Both employers and employees want a workplace characterized by fairness, balance, flexibility and freedom of choice. We’re ready to take the lead in working with all parties to find a solution for America’s workers, their families and employers.”

To review SHRM’s *Principles for a 21st Century Workplace Flexibility Policy* and letter to Congress and the Administration, visit www.SHRM.org/SHRMisHR.

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The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world’s largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China and India. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.