

## **Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs): Possible Public Policy Approaches**

There is a range of ways in which public policy can help workplace flexibility become a **norm** in the American workplace. Indeed, the various bills introduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress to increase access to FWAs, one component of workplace flexibility, represent a wide range of public policy approaches.

This document **categorizes and characterizes these public policy approaches** to help clarify the options that might be pursued to increase access to FWAs.

### **I. Policy Approaches That Encourage Actions By Employers and Employees**

The government can target **significant attention and resources** toward encouraging and supporting actions on the part of employers and employees **in creating and facilitating FWAs**.

#### **A. Public Education**

- The government could engage in **public education campaigns** to make workplace flexibility a high-profile issue. The government could educate the public about why widespread use of FWAs could be good for the country, including positive impacts on families, the environment, national security, public health, and businesses' bottom line.
- The government could provide **technical assistance and training** to assist employers in providing FWAs.
- The government could **act as a model employer and laboratory for experimentation** by providing more FWAs within the federal government.

#### **B. Incentives**

The government could target incentives directly to businesses, communities, and educational institutions to enhance the availability and use of FWAs. For example:

- The government might **give out grants** to small businesses to assist in meeting the start-up costs of implementing an FWA program.
- The government might provide **tax incentives** to employers to encourage them to establish FWA programs.
- The government might **give out awards** -- for example, monetary or symbolic awards to employers that have exemplary FWA programs.

### **C. Removing Legal Barriers In Order To Encourage Voluntary Behavior**

The government might modify or remove existing legal obligations that conceivably hinder the provision of workplace flexibility. For example, there are some laws that might impede implementation of certain phased retirement programs.

### **II. Policy Approaches That Require Action Through Labor Standards**

The government might require employers to do something intended to increase access to FWAs. Such requirements might range from labor standards that provide employees with *substantive rights* to receive FWAs to labor standards that create *structures or processes* in which FWAs are easier to receive.