

MOTION

While the United States lags behind most developed countries in providing benefits to expecting parents, recently employers as varied as Netflix, Microsoft and the U.S. Navy have begun to offer generous parental leave benefits for their employees, in recognition of the challenges of starting a family while both parents work. The U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid time off annually in the event of a birth, adoption or arrival of a foster child. Even with the 12-week guarantee provided by the FMLA, a recent national study showed that 25 percent of women return to work within two weeks of childbirth. The United States is the only developed nation that does not guarantee any paid leave to new parents.

Many successful companies are using generous parental leave to attract and retain more women, who would otherwise leave at a much higher rate than men, particularly when starting a family. When Google increased its maternity leave, the rate at which new mothers left the company was cut in half. When Aetna increased its maternity leave, the retention rate among new parents jumped from 77 to 91 percent.

Given the significant number of employees that are retirement age in the City of Los Angeles – more than 50 percent in some departments – the City, over the next several years, will be recruiting and hiring thousands of employees. With a largely service-oriented economy, the City will be competing with the private sector to attract the most talented and skilled employees. In many cases, the City will not offer the most competitive salaries or the best “perks” to compete with the private sector, but it can provide a significant benefit for new parents or those planning a family. These upcoming retirements present an opportunity for the City to increase the number of women in the City’s workforce and compete for the best employee talent.

WE THEREFORE MOVE that the Chief Legislative Analyst and the City Administrative Officer report on (i) the average time a City employee takes off during pregnancy and for bonding purposes and (ii) the costs and consequences of parents leaving the City’s workforce after having a child.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the aforementioned report include the feasibility and budgetary impacts of offering City employees four weeks paid parental leave for bonding purposes.

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SEP 1 2015

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