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COMP-TIME

DLC Talking Points, Tuesday, May 13, 1997

A New Democrat Perspective on the Issues from the Democratic Leadership Council

Talking About Comp-time

Background: This week, the Senate is considering S.4, the comp-time bill, which would allow employers to offer a choice to employees between money or time off in exchange for overtime. Last month, the House passed a similar proposal on a near party-line vote--which the President has pledged to veto, largely on the grounds that it does not go far enough to protect workers' interests.

Bottom Line: If necessary changes are made to S. 4 to address legitimate worker concerns, New Democrats should support an improved version of comp-time legislation.

Talking Points:

- ***Comp-time can help harried working families.*** Workers who want time off to tend to parents or children, extend a maternity leave, take vacation, or simply to do chores that go undone (or get done at midnight) would have that choice in workplaces with comp- time agreements.
- ***The issue is what employers can offer as compensation for overtime, not whether compensation is necessary.*** That is why the new law should strive to make the playing field between employers and employees as level as possible.
- ***Congress should put families first, not politics.*** The President and Senate Republicans aren't that far apart on comp-time legislation. If both sides are willing to write a law instead of posture for political gain, they could reach an agreement.
- ***Private sector employees deserve the same options as public employees.*** Comp-time has been available to public-sector employers since 1985. It is time to extend the same benefits to private-sector workers where appropriate.
- ***Republicans must be sensitive to Democratic concerns.*** Republicans need to understand that tinkering with one of the labor movement's greatest accomplishments--the 40 hour work week--naturally generates suspicion in Democratic quarters. For this reason, the GOP shouldn't resist attempts to further bolster worker protections.
- ***Democrats shouldn't insist on overly bureaucratic burdens in the name of worker protections.*** Democrats who rightly seek to protect workers should understand that they can, and may well, doom comp-time with overly complex conditions. In the end, what we don't want is a law so complicated that employers, especially in small businesses, choose not to offer employees any options at all for fear of compliance violations.

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