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## Rowe-Finkbeiner/Blades: Moms need more protections from government

 By [Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner](#) and [Joan Blades](#), Syndicated columnists

**GHS**

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Ironically, Betsy Hart's column entitled, "Government doesn't need to bail out working moms" was released on Thursday, at the very moment that the government was bailing out Wall Street, giving AIG access to possibly more than \$85 billion in taxpayer dollars.

What's wrong with our nation? That bailing out the big corporations is deemed acceptable, while helping families meet basic needs and protecting women from discrimination is too often dismissed as unnecessary and even un-American?

It's time to change the conversation away from the tired, old trickle-down theories that got us into this mess, where the rich get richer as it gets harder and harder for working folks - and mothers in particular - to make ends meet. The price of milk is up. The price of gas is up, and so are the prices of childcare, healthcare, and the number of hours that need to be worked each day in order to keep up with monthly costs.

First, some sad facts. A recent study by Cornell University found that, with equal resumes and job experiences, mothers are 79 percent less likely to be offered a job than non-mothers - and that mothers are paid substantially less for the same work too. Other research finds married mothers are paid 73 cents to every dollar made by men, and single mothers are paid just 60 cents to a man's dollar.

Many men and women are putting their faith in Sarah Palin, as a mother, to stand up for the rights of working moms. Yet Palin is not an example of your typical mother. Her job as governor of Alaska comes with nearly 100 percent of the policies for which our group MomsRising advocates. It comes with a pre-set salary high enough to support a family and to afford high quality childcare, as well as healthcare coverage, flexibility, paid sick days, and other benefits which are out of reach for most families.

Most mothers struggle with issues Palin doesn't face in her current position, including lack of equal pay, no paid sick days or flex time, no health coverage, and more. For example, nearly half of all private-sector workers, and 79 percent of low-wage American workers, don't have a single paid sick day for themselves or their children. Vice presidents and governors have those benefits, but others do not - including in Alaska, where a paid sick days bill was introduced this year, but has yet to pass.

The ramifications from our lack of family policies spread far and wide. A quarter of families with young children are living in poverty, a number that unfortunately is bound to go up in the current economic crisis.

We also have a shockingly high infant mortality rate here in the U.S. - higher than most other industrialized nations - even though we spend more per capita than any other nation on healthcare. Providing paid family and medical leave has been shown to decrease infant mortality by more than 20 percent, but it's yet to pass in our nation. That leaves us sticking out like a sore thumb compared to the rest of the world. A Harvard/McGill University study found that, of more than 170 countries studied, only four didn't have some form of paid leave for new moms: Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, Liberia and the United States.

It just so happens that industrialized, competitive countries all over the world provide universal health care, subsidized childcare, and paid family and medical leave - and don't have the same degree of wage gaps as we do here in the U.S.

As Betsy Hart pointed out in her column, MomsRising members do have questions that remain unanswered, such as: How can we allow this trend to continue of ignoring the most vulnerable in our nation, while throwing cash at the richest? And, will we stand by as unfair pay practices continue each and every day for half our population?

The ridiculous idea that supporting policies that are the norm in other prosperous nations, like paid sick days, health care for all, and accessible early learning opportunities, will somehow undermine families' autonomy has got to be called out for what it is: a red herring. In a nation where people now work more hours per week than most other nations, families desperately need these policies in order to keep their autonomy - so they don't have to choose between having the money to put food on the table, or sitting down at the table together as a family each night.

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