

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“Will the Bush Administration’s Overtime Proposals Mean Less Pay and Longer Hours for American Workers?”

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My name is John Fitzgerald Garrity. I am 40 years old. I have been married 10 years, and I am the father of two preschool age children. Our third child is due in May. I work full time as an Electronics Technician at the Naval Surface Warfare Center, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I began working for the Navy in 1989 when I was hired through a community college co-op program. I qualified for this position through a four year Navy apprenticeship program. My job is to inspect electronics equipment on board Navy ships, such as vertical package conveyers.

My base pay is \$55,000. I work on average 300 hours over time per year for the Navy. My most recent overtime assignment was a "sea trial" on board the USS Ronald Reagan, which is currently undergoing routine maintenance at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. During a sea trial Navy civilian workers go to sea with military personnel to test the ship's equipment and systems. During this time employees like me who are entitled to overtime pay are paid time and half for 8 of the 16 hours they work each day. In addition, we are paid the time and half overtime premium for our travel time, which usually must be accomplished on weekends. I earn about \$12,000 per year in overtime from my Navy job. I would lose a third of that pay if I lost my right to full time and half for overtime.

I also work part time at a nearby Home Depot -- typically two nights during the week as well as Saturday and Sunday. My job title is sales associate. I am also concerned that I will lose my part time job if the Department of Labor relaxes overtime pay rules. Home Depot has a strict work rule prohibiting full time employees from working overtime. Instead Home Depot uses part time employees to keep its labor cost down. If Home Depot can work its full-time employees longer hours without paying them the overtime premium, there will no longer be an economic reason to hire part timers like me.

My wife works full time in the admissions department of the Wilmington Children's Hospital. We both work hard, long hours to keep up with our living expenses, and provide a good life for ourselves and our children. For those of us who do not control our work schedule, overtime pay is simply fair compensation for the long hours we spend at work. As a skilled technical worker, it is less expensive for the Navy to pay me overtime, than to hire and train additional technicians. I have no doubt that if the Navy could work me more hours for the same pay, they would do it. I also know from my Home Depot job that the overtime pay requirement creates jobs. That job does not require a great deal of skill or training. As a result, it is cheaper to hire more workers

than it is to pay overtime to full time employees.

I was shocked to find out that the Department of Labor plans to eliminate overtime pay for workers like me. How the Department of Labor could think of cutting the wages of working and middle class Americans, and cause the elimination of who knows how many jobs in today's economy is beyond me.

To add insult to injury, the new rules will eliminate overtime pay for military veterans who gained their technical training in the military.

The overtime laws are sacred as far as I am concerned. I know that working people fought and died for the forty-hour workweek and all Americans are better for it. I appreciate those of you in the Congress who are working hard to block the Department of Labor's plan to eliminate overtime pay. I hope you succeed, for my sake and for the millions of workers and their families who would lose pay because of the new overtime rules.

Thank you.