

**Statement By Congresswoman Linda Sánchez**  
**Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on the Bush Administration's**  
**Proposed Changes to Overtime Rules**

December 11, 2003

I would like to commend Senate Democratic Policy Committee Chairman Dorgan for calling this timely hearing today.

As a co-chair of the newly formed Congressional Labor and Working Families Caucus, I strongly support Overtime Protections. For many hard-working men and women, overtime pay is not spare change. It helps families pay the mortgage, feed their kids, pay for college and save for retirement. As a card-carrying member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local 441, I have seen the importance of overtime pay to working families.

Not only is overtime a question of pay, but more importantly, it's a question of safety. Typically, the only thing that stops contractors from forcing construction-workers from working over eight hours is the additional costs. As you can imagine, 8-hours of construction work takes its toll on any worker and may lead to unsafe conditions due to fatigue. And believe me, construction is just one example of many jobs that can compromise safety if workers are fatigued.

The change in overtime regulations in the name of simplicity and clarity is nothing but an assault on working families—it reduces their income and takes away their time together. I recently spoke to a mother in my district who would be financially devastated if the changes in overtime take place. Her name is Lorie Colamonico and she lives in Paramount, CA with her daughter. Lorie is a clerk for Albertsons Grocery Store and she now has been on strike for 67 days, fighting to keep her health benefits as well as her job security.

When I asked her what overtime means to her colleagues and herself personally, she stated, "Workers deserve to be compensated for their work. With the change in law, companies will want workers to work whatever hours, whenever, and wherever. This is just inconceivable! My financial stability will be devastated if overtime pay is taken away. I rely on this money, month after month.

She further states, "President Bush touts family values and compassion...well, when you take overtime away from hard working families, it means that I will spend less time with my daughter because I'll be working more hours with no pay. What does this mean to society? It means that many of our children will not have the supervision or role modeling they need—just to save a few dollars. The President does not realize that the change in overtime is also going to put additional strains on families, who are already struggling in this bleak economy."

I'm sharing her story with you today, because Lorie is like many Americans who work hard and play by the rules. It is important that we highlight and show how this affects real people—they are our neighbors, families, and friends. What message does Congress want to send to hard working Americans like Lorie—that we don't value this work enough to fairly compensate them for it?

This week, I along with many of democratic colleagues in the House took a courageous stance by voting against the omnibus bill. For me, I believe that I needed to protect overtime pay for millions of hard-working Americans, including cops, nurses, fire fighters and many others who care for our safety. The fight now moves to the Senate.

Republicans in Congress and President Bush prefer to provide tax cuts for the wealthy while cutting the pay of hard working Americans. So much for their claim of being compassionate! Republicans and this President need to stop stiffing working families—working families need and deserve overtime pay.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. Again, I would like to thank the Chairman for holding this very important hearing.