ASSEMBLY OFFICE OF RESEARCH
Director: Steve Thompson  
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Established in 1966, the Assembly Office of Research (AOR) brings together legislators, scholars, research experts and interested parties from within and outside the legislature to conduct extensive studies regarding problems facing the state.

Under the direction of the Assembly's bipartisan Committee on Policy Research, AOR investigates current state issues and publishes reports which include long-term policy recommendations. Such investigative projects often result in legislative action, usually in the form of bills.

AOR also processes research requests from Assemblymembers. Results of these short-term research projects are confidential unless the requesting legislators authorize their release.

MAJOR PROJECTS:
California's Trauma Care System: A Medical and Financial Emergency (October 1987), prepared at the request of Assemblymember Mike Roos, concludes that the system faces serious financial problems which are "likely to increase unless funds are provided to help offset the significant cost losses occurring today." AOR staff estimate that the system's 1987 losses will total approximately $100 million, with unreimbursed physician costs approaching $30.8 million.

At one time, California's system included as many as 55 Trauma Centers. Thirty-five Centers responded to AOR's requests for information. Those 35 hospitals served over 37,000 trauma patients during the 1986-87 fiscal year.

The AOR study cites several causes for the large losses incurred by the hospitals in the system. At the 29 Centers which reported cost data, "45% of all trauma patients make no payment on the hospital bills they incur." AOR staff estimate that those 29 hospitals lost nearly $66 million during 1986-87. The study places the average loss per nonpaying trauma patient statewide at approximately $5,000.

Physician fees constitute another source of large losses attributable to the trauma care system. The study estimates that university and teaching hospitals lose an additional $7.4 million in physician fees annually; and non-public hospitals lose $12.9 million in physician fees. Again, the losses are due to nonpaying patients.

To solve the financial problems of the system, the study makes two recommendations: (1) current legislation should be amended to fund 25% of the cost loss for Trauma Centers and physicians serving the Centers; it is estimated that an appropriation of $32.7 million would suffice; and (2) the legislature should assign to an appropriate committee, for interim study, the evaluation of the state and local oversight system to ensure better performance in the future. AOR staff were "appalled" at the lack of knowledge of the system's financial problems at the state and local level, considering the $4.4 million annual appropriation to fund the oversight system.

SENATE OFFICE OF RESEARCH
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Established and directed by the Senate Committee on Rules, the Senate Office of Research (SOR) serves as the bipartisan, strategic research and planning unit for the Senate. SOR produces major policy reports, issue briefs, background information on legislation and, occasionally, sponsors symposia and conferences.

Any Senator or Senate committee may request SOR's research, briefing and consulting services. Resulting reports are not always released to the public.

MAJOR PROJECTS:
Time Off for Parents: The Benefits, Costs, and Options of Parental Leave (September 1987) explores current issues pertaining to parental employment leave following the birth of a child. The report provides an overview of the situation faced by most new parents who are employed, including a discussion of factors which seriously impact those individuals and their children.

Such factors include the growing economic pressures faced by working parents (e.g., in 1984, 46% of women in the workforce were single, divorced, widowed, or separated); the weakening of the role of extended families (caused in part by increasing household mobility and generational distance); and a shortage of adequate professional child care, particularly with regard to care of infants (the minimum age for admission of a child to a day care program is generally two years). The critical nature of such a shortage becomes more apparent in light of SOR's findings that "half of the mothers of infants under one year
of age now work, a majority of them full-time."

SOR's report studies some of the issues related to parental leave policies, focusing on infant development, family stress, women's rights, philosophical issues, employer costs, private and social benefits, and the demographics of employment. With regard to all these issues, the underlying question is whether and to what extent the government should ensure the existence of private sector parental leave programs.

Many advocates of parental leave seek government action ensuring that private employers (1) allow employees substantial time off following the birth of a child; and (2) guarantee that the same or comparable jobs will be available upon employees' return to work. Employers balk at the suggestion of such intervention, citing the economic costs associated with replacing employees on leave while holding their jobs open. Another major concern involves the legal/philosophical issues surrounding increased government regulation of private sector workplaces.

In its consideration of this controversial subject, SOR surveyed a number of options for public intervention, including (1) encouraging voluntary establishment of parental leave programs through the offering of government incentives; (2) requiring parental leave but offering government subsidies to mitigate economic effects on employers; and (3) requiring parental leave programs without offering any subsidies. As to option (3), the SOR report favors limiting application of the requirement to those families where both parents—or the only parent—work(s). Such an approach would focus on the area of greatest need and limit the economic impact of such a policy on employers.

The SOR report on parental leave was issued in September, just as AB 368 (Moore) was being sent to the Governor. AB 368, which would have given parents up to four months' unpaid leave for parental duties (which might arise under a variety of circumstances including the birth, adoption, or serious illness of a child), was vetoed. As reported on October 2 in the Sacramento Digest, the Governor noted in his message that "there has been no demonstration that current law fails to adequately provide for a family's needs in this area."