

Professor says US lags in workplace gender equality

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A Purdue University professor known internationally for her work and research in gender equity in the workplace believes Monday's (Feb. 13) female business leaders meeting at the White House was a good start.

President Donald Trump and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the creation of the United States-Canada Council for the Advancement of Women Business Leaders-Female Entrepreneurs. Ellen Ernst Kossek, the Basil S. Turner Professor of Management and research director of the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership, said the issue goes beyond equity to being a serious economic issue.

"We've heard about the glass ceiling, but we have not focused enough on making the case to integrate women into (all levels of management) in corporations," the Krannert School of Management professor said. "It's critical for the economic growth of this country. Women are receiving a majority of the college degrees in the U.S, but this has not resulted in similar rates of promotion into leadership positions in business and society.

"We're not procreating as quickly, people are getting married later and having fewer kids, and that's going to hurt our economy. Gender equity is not just a nice thing to do, but as the U.S. workforce ages, and families grow smaller, we have got to get the talent from domestic women across the life span."

Kossek said many corporations have created policies that look good on

paper, but those promoted are the employees working 60 or 70 hours a week.

"We know we're one of the three industrialized countries in the world that doesn't have paid family leave when you have a child. And we also do not have paid family leave for elder care, a crisis that is looming large in this country," she said. "I think there is room for a floor of basic rights for gender equality. People should not be worried about losing their job (or promotion) if they have a baby or care for their aging mom or dad."

Most studies show that women do most of the care not just for their parents but their in-laws and spouses.

Kossek suggested a proactive government approach establishing state incentives for creating [gender equity](#) programs.

"President Trump wants to give incentives to companies that hire here," Kossek said. "I've always thought we should give incentives to innovative companies where you hire, develop and retain talent that mirrors the gender representation in the labor market, education degrees, and does well at retention and development.

"Just like what the U.S. did several decades ago for welfare reform, we could do programs for states that come up with great gender equality programs. We need to make workplace gender equality in the U.S. part of our cultural DNA and significantly move the needle."

Provided by Purdue University

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