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Finding Time

The Economics of Work-Life Conflict

Heather Boushey

“Time is our most precious asset, and families feel like they have less and less of it. Heather Boushey’s important book shows that there is much that policy can do to reclaim our time and our lives. In a rational world its arguments would have an important impact on the future of American economic policy.”

—Lawrence H. Summers, Harvard University

“This thoughtful and engaging book exposes a vitally important and timely topic, and Boushey is uniquely positioned to address it.”

—Ruth Milkman, City University of New York

Employers today are demanding more and more of employees’ time. And from campaign barbecues to the blogosphere, workers across the United States are raising the same worried question: How can I get ahead at my job while making sure my family doesn’t fall behind?

Heather Boushey argues that resolving work–life conflicts is as vital for individuals and families as it is essential for realizing the country’s productive potential. The federal government, however, largely ignores the connection between individual work–life conflicts and more sustainable economic growth. The consequence: business and government treat the most important things in life—health, children, elders—as matters for workers to care about entirely on their own time and dime. That might have worked in the past, but only thanks to a hidden subsidy: the American Wife, a behind-the-scenes, stay-at-home fixer of what economists call market failures. When women left the home—out of desire and necessity—the old system fell apart. Families and the larger economy have yet to recover.

But change is possible. *Finding Time* presents detailed innovations to help Americans find the time they need and help businesses attract more productive workers. A policy wonk with working-class roots and a deep understanding of the stresses faced by families up and down the income ladder, Heather Boushey demonstrates with clarity and compassion that economic efficiency and equity do not have to be enemies. They can be reconciled if we have the vision to forge a new social contract for business, government, and private citizens.

Heather Boushey is Executive Director and Chief Economist of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth.