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An Overview of Early Laws Increasing Access to Flexible Scheduling and Reduced Hours in the Federal Workforce

In recognition of demographic shifts and the nation's energy crisis, Congress passed legislation in the 1970s and 1980s to enhance flexible work arrangements in the federal workforce, including alternative work schedules, part-time, and job-sharing positions.

Legislation to Encourage Flexible Scheduling and Reduced Hours

The **Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act (FEFCWA)** authorizes, but does not require, agencies to offer alternative work schedules to employees.ⁱ FEFCWA permits employees to designate non-traditional arrival and departure times, centered around core agency hours, and to experiment with four-day workweeks or other compressed schedules. Under the law, implementation and employee utilization of alternative work schedules depends on management support and leadership.

Before FEFCWA was permanently authorized in 1985, two FEFCWA pilot programs were launched in 1978 and continued in 1982.ⁱⁱ The Civil Service Commission (the precursor to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)) was charged with evaluating the program on six criteria: the efficiency of government operations, the impact on mass transit facilities and traffic, levels of energy consumption, service to the public, increased opportunities for full-time and part-time employment, and impact on individuals and families generally.ⁱⁱⁱ

The government's need to embrace complex missions and employees' needs to balance work and life obligations served as the momentum behind the **Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act (FEPTCEA)**.^{iv} FEPTCEA requires agencies to create and maintain programs for part-time career employment. It establishes criteria for part-time positions, requires the setting of annual goals for part-time positions and requires procedures to establish or convert positions to part-time. The law also requires that agencies investigate the suitability of converting full-time positions to part-time positions.^v Finally, the law tasks OPM with advising and assisting agencies as they create and maintain part-time/job-share employment programs, including running and evaluating a research and demonstration program.^{vi}