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## Kirsten Gillibrand wants women back in the kitchen

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Just as our national debt surpasses \$22 trillion for the first time in history, presidential hopeful Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., wants to rehash her worst idea: the FAMILY Act.

Our least-principled senator has made the media rounds putting a shiny veneer on the FAMILY Act, dressing it up as a feminist dream. But given the ramifications it would have on women's progress in the workplace, it'd be anything but.

Gillibrand's bill would guarantee 12 weeks of paid leave at a rate of at least 66 percent of earnings for new parents, as well as some coverage for other family caregiving. Unlike the Ivanka Trump plan backed by the White House and some Republicans, which claims to be deficit neutral by allowing adults to pull from "their" Social Security prematurely — remember folks, it's a lockbox and not a Ponzi scheme! — Gillibrand funds her paid leave with a payroll tax.

To force employers to fund their workers' paid leave, encouraging gender discrimination to avoid costly risks, is one thing. To force you, me, and every other average Joe on the street to do it is another thing entirely. Worst of all, it will stymie decades of progress made by women in the workplace.

As it turns out, if you don't hand free cash to reward women for giving birth, they tend to work more over the course of their entire lifetimes. That's good for the nation's GDP, but it's even better for the individual progress of women.

Although paid leave in European practice and American proposals is gender-neutral, it doesn't manifest itself that way in reality. Studies of European paid leave plans show that in nations which don't mandate that both parents take equal time off work, women take the overwhelming majority of paid leave time. The net result? Whereas America has almost achieved gender parity in management, just three in ten managers are women in Denmark, Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Sure, work ethic is endemic to the American character, but entitlements always corrupt. The Cato Institute found that average length of paid leave in the eurozone has tripled since 1970 to a whopping 57 weeks. That means that if a European woman has three children, she would lose an average of at least 3.3 years of the peak of her professional growth, but probably far more given that the Cato estimate averages men and women, the latter of whom disproportionately take paid leave.

Women who want to work first and foremost as homemakers absolutely ought to do so. But that should be a choice, not a product of the government re-engineering society to keep women out of the upper echelons of the economy. Progress for women in the workplace is compounding, and as advances in gender parity and the #MeToo movement have demonstrated, requires momentum at a cultural level as the marginal social cost of hiring each extra woman diminishes.

Feminist lawmakers can and should prioritize child care licensing reform to allow more providers to enter the market as well as child tax credits. But if feminists want women not just in the workplace but dominating it, they cannot demand the government nannies them into submission.