



Poll finds support for paid family leave tumbles when Americans are presented with costs

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The idea of a new a government program for paid leave is overwhelmingly popular among Americans, right up until they are informed about the possible costs.

That's the conclusion of a new YouGov [survey](#) conducted with the libertarian Cato Institute.

According to the poll of 1,700 Americans, a whopping 74 percent support "a new federal program to provide 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave."

But that support starts to erode as the costs and potential tradeoffs mount. Support drops to 54 percent if respondents were told that the program would cost them \$200 per year. If it were to cost them \$1,200 per year, just 43 percent would favor the idea, compared with 56 who would oppose it. The dollar figures represent a range of cost estimates done for the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act, a leading proposal from some Democrats led by Sen. Kristen Gillibrand of New York, which would be paid for with a new payroll tax.

Furthermore, a number of studies on family leave have found that paid leave policies could hinder women's abilities to get hired or get promoted to managers, as well as mean that employers simply give fewer raises or make cuts to other benefits. Among possible these and other possible tradeoffs, the survey found regarding paid leave that:

- 76 percent oppose it if it required government to cut spending for other programs such as Social Security and education
- 69 percent oppose it if women became less likely to get promoted and become managers
- 68 percent oppose it if employers reduced benefits people receive, such as health care benefits
- 62 percent oppose it if people who don't use the program still had their taxes raised to pay for others' benefits
- 60 percent oppose it if one would receive smaller pay raises in the future
- 57 percent oppose it if it increased the federal deficit

Some may dismiss the findings as coming from a poll conducted by a libertarian think tank that obviously opposes government paid leave. But even if one were tempted to do so, the survey

does offer some valuable insight into the malleability of public opinion on an issue that at first blush seems broadly popular.