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## **Once Informed Of Costs To Women And Taxpayers, Support For Federal Paid Leave Plummet**

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When Americans aren't told how much it might cost women and taxpayers to create a 12-week federal paid leave entitlement, 74 percent support the idea. If told the mid-range estimate of how much it would cost them in tax increases, however (\$450 per year), 52 percent of Americans opposed the idea. If the tradeoff for creating this entitlement were cutting existing entitlements such as Social Security, 76 percent opposed it.

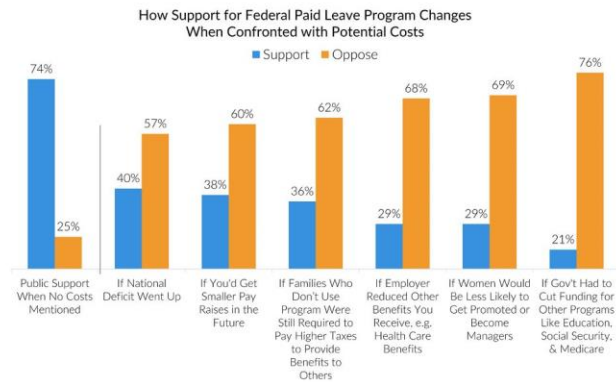
The Cato Institute national Paid Leave Survey of 1,700 Americans was conducted by YouGov and released Tuesday. Its findings upsets the narrative that Americans so highly support government-nudged leave that Republicans should get into the game so Democrats don't net all the political points and control its design.

The [report accompanying the poll results](#) also probes "trade-offs that academic research has found may result from implementing a federal paid leave program." Americans wouldn't want their own pay to suffer (60 percent opposition) or mothers to get fewer career boosts (69 percent opposition) in exchange for leave program, for example. Neither would they want employers to cut other benefits, such as subsidized health insurance, to offer paid leave.

Yet these are precisely things that research suggests are likely to happen if any government paid leave program or mandate is created, the Cato report says: "Research has [found](#) that government-provided paid leave programs may slow the pace of women's career trajectories. [Studies](#) have [found](#) that government-provided paid leave may lead to fewer women getting promoted and becoming managers because they take longer leaves than they otherwise would. Other [studies](#) have [noted](#) that employers, particularly [smaller companies](#) that have difficulty accommodating workers taking leave, may be less willing to hire female employees to begin with."

## Americans Are Unwilling to Make These Trade-Offs in Order to Establish a Federal Paid Leave Program

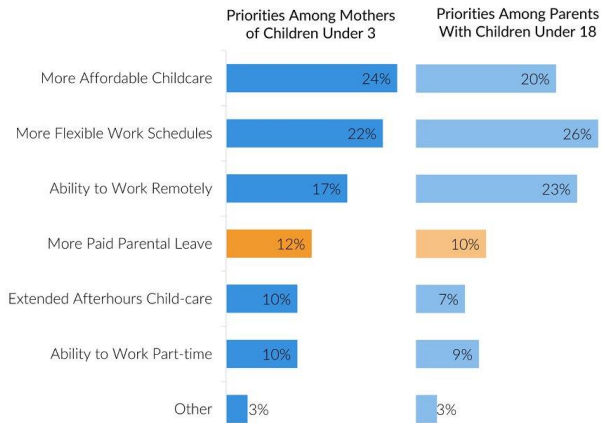
Q: Would you favor or oppose establishing a new government program to provide 12 weeks of paid leave to workers after the birth, or adoption, of a child - or to deal with their own or a family member's serious illness?  
 Follow-up: What if this program meant...[INSERT] then would you favor or oppose establishing a new government program to provide 12 weeks of paid leave to workers after the birth, or adoption, of a child - or to deal with their own or a family member's serious illness?



Further polling shows that mothers themselves prioritize other things for their families above paid leave, such as flexible jobs and the ability to work from home.

## Paid Family Leave Policies Are Not Parents' Top Priority

Which of the following would be the best way to help you balance work and family?



Note: Cost questions asked of half samples  
 SOURCE: CATO 2018 PAID LEAVE SURVEY

On the flip side, “More than three-fourths (78%) of Americans support cultivating a culture of saving for parental and family leave through establishing a new tax-advantaged saving account for this purpose,” says the report. Support for this idea is extremely high (69 percent or higher) among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

“Experience in Europe demonstrates that once a government-supported paid leave program is established, even if limited in scope, it will very quickly increase in size and scope,” the Cato report says. “For instance, Sweden offered 26 weeks of paid leave in 1970 and increased that to 56 weeks by 2016. Sweden is not unique. In fact, since 1970, OECD countries’ government-supported paid leave programs have grown from an average of 17.2 weeks to 52.3 weeks in 2016.”

The report also cites data that indicate Americans would work significantly less if they could get paid to be absent from work through a program like this. That would increase its costs to businesses and taxpayers. Since, as the poll shows, Americans find that unacceptable, the only way paid leave has high support among Americans is if proponents hide its true costs.

All this suggests that, rather than mimicking Democrats, Republicans need to come up with a truly liberating family policy package that addresses what Americans really want out of the nexus between family and work needs. That is flexibility and affordability. The proven way to address those two concerns is through shrinking the size of government: deregulation and cutting government costs so people can keep more of their own money, and are rewarded more in the marketplace for creating wealth through hard work and innovation. As I wrote earlier this year:

*Regulations favor big business instead of the little gal, the 40-hour work week with expensive mandated benefits, and places that can hire accountants and lawyers for compliance and to get new ideas through myriad regulatory gatekeepers before they can hit the market. 'Many [women] just don't want to work in the way that men traditionally have done—40 hours a week, at regular times, with no long voluntary interruptions'...*

Education, child care, employment, and health are all highly controlled by a maze of antiquated administrative bureaucracies, regulations, and laws. Our current structures are a better fit for the Industrial Age than for the Information Age, and they're a massive drag on business and employees' flexibility to design work-life balance that works for their individual needs.

Our federal spending, entitlements, and debt are another huge drag on people's ability to save up for their own expenses and plan their own lives, because it shackles their current income to past generations' commitments and other people's life decisions. Republicans need to stop chasing shiny objects that big corporations want taxpayers to take off their plate, such as paid leave, and get down to doing the real work to restructure and hack down America's decrepit welfare state to fit what the next generation and the next economy need.

Republicans blew their chance to do things like this with their rare unilateral control of Congress and the presidency from 2016. They'd best not do it again. Me and a whole lot of other ordinary working people are tired of waiting for them to get their act together and represent our best interests.