



Republicans Push for Paid Leave, Follow in Trump's Footsteps

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Republicans are now planning to introduce a slew of proposals on paid family leave in the coming weeks, representing a new shift for the GOP after President Donald Trump's recent push to empower working parents—a topic previously dominated by Democrats.

In his State of the Union address, Trump vowed to implement a nationwide paid family leave plan “so that every new parent has the chance to bond with their newborn child.” He said he was “proud” to be the first president to include such a proposal in their budget.

Following in the president's footsteps, Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) will be introducing a paid family leave plan “next week” a spokesperson for the senator confirmed with The Epoch Times.

Other Republican lawmakers working on similar legislation include Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Bill Cassidy, (R-La.) and Rep. Ann Wagner (R-Mo.), Roll Call confirmed. The batch of upcoming bills is expected to be the first wave of paid leave proposals from Republicans in the run-up to 2020.

Last year, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) introduced a proposal that would provide parental leave benefits through Social Security, but it failed to gain traction.

One key advocate of paid family leave is Ivanka Trump, daughter and senior adviser to the president. Ivanka Trump stood with her father during a 2016 rally in Pennsylvania where he discussed a six-week paid leave proposal. Since then, Ivanka has met several times with members of both the House and Senate to push for paid family leave.

Last month, Wagner met with Ivanka to discuss a paid parental leave bill. Wagner said she was grateful to have Ivanka Trump, who she said is “strong partner in the fight for paid parental leave.”

“Our priority is to expand freedom & flexibility & give new parents the option of paid parental leave so they can spend more time w/their children during the most precious & formative time of a child's life,” she wrote on Twitter.

In December 2017, President Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) which included a new tax credit of up to 25 percent to businesses offering paid family leave to their employees. The White House said the tax credit marked an important step in promoting paid family leave nationwide.

Aside from the tax credit benefits, the Trump administration argues that paid family leave is an investment in America's future that will strengthen the family bond and improve financial

stability—values that Republicans have long held. The administration also linked the paid leave proposal to its pro-life policies. Trump recently signed a letter to Congress making clear that he will veto any legislation that weakens protections for the unborn.

Polls have shown that paid leave is popular among American voters from both political parties. One poll last year from the Cato Institute found 88 percent of Democrats, 71 percent of independents, and 60 percent of Republicans support a government program to provide 12 weeks of paid family leave. The support from Republicans was spearheaded by its women, with 72 percent saying they would support such a proposal compared to 50 percent of Republican men.

Another poll by the Pew Research Center found 82 percent of Americans who said that mothers should have paid maternity leave, while 69 percent support paid paternity leave.

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