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FEDERALIST

Wrong, GOP: Making Babies Should Be Between A Husband And Wife, Not Single Women And Taxpayers

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March 28, 2019

Add another set of Republicans to those advocating for expanding Social Security for the seventh time to subsidize women not working after childbirth. On Wednesday Sens. Marco Rubio and Mitt Romney, and Reps. Ann Wagner and Dan Crenshaw, unveiled another plan to divert Social Security subsidies to parents for up to three months after the birth of a child. This in addition to a similar plan recently offered by Sens. Mike Lee and Joni Ernst.

Look, Congress hasn't passed a budget in a *decade*. To shuffle government subsidies while steadfastly refusing to get the country's finances in order is surreally irresponsible — and from the party that promotes itself as the fiscally responsible ones, no less. It is impossible for voters to be able to trust pie in the sky promises about new entitlements until our representatives have earned that trust by fixing the old entitlements.

Instead of working to restore that trust by addressing the many major issues Congress has steadfastly ignored for decades — including reforming our exploited asylum laws, passing federal budgets, drawing down foreign wars, cutting our national debt, ending federal meddling in education, and addressing the impending bankruptcies of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security — Republicans are complicit with Democrats in decades of bipartisan national destruction. Seventy percent of Americans disapprove of Congress, and it's not because they're not passing enough bipartisan vote-buying schemes.

Dudes: Paid Leave Is Not a Female Voter Priority

Republicans are listening to campaign consultants telling them they need the women's vote in 2020, and that buying them off with baby-scented government checks will do the trick. Yes, majorities of Americans say they support government subsidies for postpartum mothers, but it is on no Republican-leaning constituency's top priorities list. It's not even a top priority *for mothers of children aged three and younger*, and public support evaporates with any discussion of tradeoffs, as the Cato Institute's Emily Ekins has found in careful polling.

Further, Republican voters support many things Republicans have refused to advance, such as cutting federal funding for abortion providers, repealing Obamacare, and addressing illegal immigration. So why would public opinion polling matter on paid leave but not on nationally banning late-term abortion, or ending our Middle East occupations? Seems some folks are selectively choosing which polls to act on.

Regardless of polling, Congress should not be displacing local solutions for individual needs by making more mass social welfare programs. One size does not fit all, especially when it comes to raising children. One size doesn't even fit most.

Consider that polling shows the vast majority of mothers consistently want, not to pause full-time work for a bare three months after the life-changing event of birthing a human baby, but to stop working full-time altogether and focus for a season on their young families. Pew research also found that "More than 90% of working moms who have either reduced their hours or taken a significant amount of time off from work [to raise their family] say they are glad they did so."

This is not a program that is even a fit for the majority of American women, although it's being billed as a woman's voting issue. That disconnect should make one wonder whether those advocating for these kinds of programs really understand and care about women, or are using women as a bumper sticker to advance other goals.

Women Don't Want Welfare, We Want Self-Sufficiency

In fact, as the history of federal welfare programs demonstrates conclusively, creating government solutions to private needs only makes those needs worse. This is the tip of a spear aimed at women's hearts, and it will like every other social welfare program be pushed further and further in as time goes by. Its encouragement to women to separate from their tiny infants will only make women less happy, and communicate to the men who helped them make their babies that they are not needed, which also makes women less happy and destroys their financial security.

Proponents even admit that leave programs increase mothers' attachment to work, which child development research shows shortchanges their children and thus the nation: "Paid parental leave encourages more people to come back to work after having or adopting their child, which increases labor force attachment." Again, women largely *do not want to* go back to full-time work three months after having a child. We do so when we feel pressured to, economically and socially. The solution is to relieve that pressure, not wedge women further into their least desired option through programs like paid leave.

We relieve economic pressure on families by deregulating the economy and *reducing* the size of government, which President Trump's tenure has shown is extremely effective at allowing families to self-fund their childbearing choices. This is both good for those families and for American taxpayers already on the hook for the biggest mountain of debt ever generated in human history.

We can do this even further by eliminating marriage penalties from existing state and federal welfare programs. I'd sooner increase welfare benefits to people married to the biological parents of their children than support paid leave, simply because that reduces family separation rather than increasing it, as paid leave does.

Pitting Women Against Each Other

Programs like this redistribute earnings to government-privileged groups at the expense of government-disadvantaged groups. It does not support *all* mothers, but only the minority who decide to leave their helpless newborn soon after the child is born. Most of those mothers will put their infants in daycare, which has proven negative effects for children and society, including

higher rates of crime and lower rates of academic achievement. We should certainly not make government preferences for life choices that hurt families and society.

Its woman-harmful effects will also likely include encouraging employers to jettison or reduce private paid leave offerings, because why would a business pay for something when they can get taxpayers to pay for it instead? Experience in other countries and some states shows that paid leave hurts women's career advancement because women use paid leave to care for children while men use it to advance their careers, thus expanding employment gaps between the sexes. It also encourages businesses to not hire or promote women. That's not woman-friendly, now, is it.

It's also not woman-friendly to communicate to women that childbirth is a quick bump beneath their rat race treadmill that doesn't fundamentally change their lives forever. For this is the simple truth of being a woman, and having the capacity to create life: it is not a small thing, but a major and transformative thing. There is no "going back" after having a baby, in any sense. There is only going forward into a completely new kind of life. Paid-leave programs then in effect deny womanhood's realities, all in the name of affirming women.

We ought to be able to expect better from so-called conservatives than acting on their political opponents' anti-female, anti-family premises.

Don't Want to Be a Euro-Welfare State? Don't Act Like One

We also can't afford where this proposal is going — two-year paid leave like European welfare states, which is what Democrats will do with a program like this once established — so we shouldn't buy the ticket for the first leg of the trip. Instead we should be encouraging people to be responsible for their own decisions rather than using government to stick the consequences of their decisions to other, more responsible people.

The bigger government is, the smaller citizens must be. Do we want big government, or big citizenship? That's an either-or question, and Republicans are picking the former.

The more government does for families, the more it destroys families.

It seems most Republicans still believe that taxpayers are the appropriate sponsors of every single possible wish that an American could have, rather than seeing government as a constitutionally limited institution that only exists to secure our natural rights so that we as individuals and families can live free. The way to get people to take on big personal responsibilities like raising children is to have small government that doesn't make it ever easier for people to shirk basic duties like raising their own kids.

Instead, Republicans seem hellbent on embodying Ronald Reagan's nice bureaucrat who royally screws up people's lives with the promise: "We're from the government and we're here to help." No, you're not. Government can only do a few things well, and none of them are related to raising children.

The more government does for families, the more it destroys families. The entire U.S. experience with European-style welfare amply demonstrates this. We need less of taxpayers being forced to underwrite basic care for other people's children, and more of citizens taking responsibility for their own lives and families, or our republic is quite simply over.