

## Trump's Department of Labor Unveils Paid Family Leave Program

Ted Goodman

May 23, 2017

President Donald Trump's Department of Labor introduced a paid family leave proposal in its 2018 budget request, released today.

The proposal, which has been a priority of first daughter Ivanka Trump, would provide six weeks of paid family leave to new mothers and fathers, including adoptive parents. "The proposal will allow states to establish paid parental leave programs in a way that is most appropriate for their workforce and economy," DOL said in a [statement](#).

DOL said that the proposal would be fully funded by savings accrued through reforms to the unemployment insurance system, including reforms that reduce the amount of improper payments. Unemployment insurance, which is dispersed at the state level, provides temporary and partial earnings replacement for workers that have become unemployed and are actively searching for work.

"For the first time ever, by any administration of any party, we are proposing a nationwide paid parental leave program," budget director [Mick Mulvaney](#) said. While some experts have questioned whether reforms to the UI system will be enough to fund a sustainable paid-family leave program, DOL officials say the proposal is meant to kick-start the program, with states determining the long term revenue streams.

American Enterprise Institute labor policy expert Aparna Mathur said that doing it through unemployment insurance reforms, including the reduction of UI over-payments, is a problem. "That suggests that the funding stream is unreliable and most states will be reluctant to base a whole new program on an uncertain stream of revenues," Mathur told the Daily Caller News Foundation (TheDCNF). "So my worry is that while the proposal will exist on paper, it may never actually be implemented," she continued.

"Allowing each state to have its own eligibility rules and benefit amounts will lead to uncertainty about who will actually benefit from the policy," Mathur said. "In some states you have to be earning \$1900 for a quarter to be eligible, in others, you can be earning \$1300," she said, adding that some states have work hours requirements. "So it's a bit messy for people to try to figure out whether they will get the benefit and what the benefit amount will be," she told TheDCNF.

The DOL sees its proposal as the start-up cost for the program. States would essentially design their own programs, deciding for themselves where the funding would come from. The DOL said that the next phase is for each state to design its own plan.

“Even though the proposed paid leave program includes parents of both genders, research suggests women will bear the brunt of the cost: in states like California and countries like Norway and Great Britain, the evidence suggests paid parental leave policies increase female unemployment, reduce the proportion of leadership roles filled by women, and even exacerbate gender inequality,” Vanessa Brown Calder, a labor policy analyst at the CATO Institute, told TheDCNF.

“What’s the alternative? Reductions in corporate taxes and corporate regulation will create a buyers’ market for labor, where employers need to retain employees,” Brown argued. “Only under those circumstances can women ask for and obtain the benefits they need, whether that’s paid leave, flexibility, or something else, without the harmful consequences of the current proposal,” she said.

The proposal is part of the fiscal year 2018 budget request for the Department of Labor.