

Paid Family Leave Is Gaining Momentum—But Will That Be Enough?

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The 2016 election brought the discussion of paid family leave into millions of American households on a nationwide scale. In one of the most divisive presidential elections in recent history, both Republican Donald J. Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton supported paid family leave. During the campaign, Trump proposed a plan of six weeks of paid maternity leave for new mothers after childbirth. Clinton put forth a plan of 12 weeks of partially paid leave for men and women whether they become parents through pregnancy, surrogacy or adoption. While both put forward very different plans, it marked the first time in U.S. history when the two major-party candidates proposed such policies. During his address to Congress in February 2017, President Trump referenced working with both parties to ensure new parents have paid family leave. However, progress on a national scale may take longer than anticipated.

Currently, there is no federal requirement that employers offer paid leave. Existing federal law under the Family and Medical Leave Act, commonly known as the FMLA, allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. The law applies to private employers with 50 or more employees.

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