

# Real Paid Leave: Support the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, Oppose Retirement Penalties for Parents

**The FAMILY Act: H.R.947/S.337**  
**JUNE 2018**

The United States needs a national paid family and medical leave program, but not just any proposal will do – policy details matter. The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act would create a comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable paid family and medical leave plan that covers all working people for a well-established range of family and medical needs. In contrast, a reckless paid leave plan that pits the needs of some families against others’ – by excluding essential caregiving needs and siphoning funding from Social Security – would be a harmful step in the wrong direction.

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It is past time for Congress to take action to solve the country’s paid leave crisis: When people are forced to choose between taking time to care for themselves or a loved one and their jobs, it hurts our families, erodes public health, impedes gender and racial equality and holds back our economy. Members of Congress need to know that the FAMILY Act is the only paid leave plan that truly meets the needs of working families in the United States.

Tell your members of Congress to support the FAMILY Act for strong, inclusive paid leave and oppose a risky proposal that asks new parents to trade their Social Security retirement security later for parental leave today.

## Talking Points

*The talking points below are meant to provide messaging guidance, but remember that the most compelling arguments come from the personal stories of constituents who need or have used paid leave. Please make these talking points your own!*

- ▶ **At some point, nearly everyone will need to care for a new child or deal with a serious personal or family health issue – and most will want or need time away from their jobs when they do.**

- ▶ Unfortunately, only 15 percent of working people have paid family leave through their jobs. That means more than 100 million people are left behind when they need time off to care for a loved one.
- ▶ When people do not have access to paid leave, they are faced too often with heartbreaking choices between their families' financial stability and their need to provide or receive care.
- ▶ **Families across the country are caring for aging parents and elderly loved ones – often at the same time as they are raising children.**
  - ▶ Politicians and the media often focus on new moms and babies when discussing paid leave. But any national paid leave program that ignores our country's growing family caregiving needs, including elder care, is not sufficient.
  - ▶ A growing number of millennials – people aged 18-34 – are caring both for children and for older relatives and are struggling to manage their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need. As our workforce ages, older workers also need time away from work to address their own illnesses or disabilities.
  - ▶ A plan that covers only parental leave excludes the vast majority of workers who need time to care. Nearly 75 percent of people using the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) had to take time away from work to care for family members with serious illnesses, injuries or disabilities, for their own serious health issue or for military caregiving.
- ▶ **The FAMILY Act, modeled on successful state programs, is the inclusive, comprehensive paid leave program that voters want and the country needs.**
  - ▶ The FAMILY Act is inclusive of all working people, regardless of where they live, their employer or the nature of their job.
  - ▶ The FAMILY Act is a comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of working people as reflected in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA): gender-neutral parental leave, family care leave, personal medical leave and military caregiving leave.
  - ▶ The FAMILY Act would help keep more family caregivers – and people with their own health conditions – employed and strengthen their financial positions over time.
  - ▶ The FAMILY Act is affordable for workers, employers and the government, and is sustainably funded without harming other essential programs.
  - ▶ The FAMILY Act is secure so that workers would be protected from negative employment consequences – such as discrimination or retaliation – when they need leave.
- ▶ **The leading counter-proposal is incomplete and harmful – covering only new parents by asking them to trade Social Security later for paid leave now and excluding family care and personal medical leave.**
  - ▶ People need both paid leave now and adequate Social Security retirement benefits later – one should not come at the expense of the other. New moms and

dads should not have to jeopardize their retirement security by using Social Security to fund their parental leave.

- ▶ Any plan that leaves behind people caring for family members or dealing with their own serious health issue does not address the needs of America's workers and families.
- ▶ A proposal to redirect Social Security retirement benefits for paid leave without new funding is a risky proposition for today's retirees and the Social Security Administration. We should be investing in both, not forcing unnecessary tradeoffs.
- ▶ For data about the need for paid family and medical leave in your state, visit [NationalPartnership.org/PaidLeaveMeansMap](https://NationalPartnership.org/PaidLeaveMeansMap).

## Sample Action Alert

*Use the sample language below to create an action alert urging your members to contact Congress, or send them to [SupportPaidLeave.org/Take-Action](https://SupportPaidLeave.org/Take-Action) (this is a coalition action alert and does not collect the names or contact information of people who take action so that your members' contact information is not shared to other groups' lists).*

### **Action Alert: Tell Your Member of Congress to Fight for Real Paid Leave and Preserve Social Security**

Dear Supporter,

Thanks to the advocacy of supporters like you, the campaign for a real, strong national paid family and medical leave program has reached a critical moment: Congress is about to hold a hearing on paid leave. They will be discussing the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, a comprehensive, workable and sustainable paid leave plan, along with a dangerous alternative proposal that does not meet the needs of America's families. We need your help to make sure members of Congress are not confused about what a real paid leave plan looks like.

Senators Marco Rubio, Mike Lee and Joni Ernst are working on a proposal to raid Social Security to pay for a paid parental leave program, which would exclude the three-quarters of people who take leave for family caregiving or personal medical needs and would undermine families' retirement security.

While we are glad to have lawmakers from both sides of the aisle join the paid leave conversation, this proposal is reckless, divisive and not the real paid leave voters want and the country needs.

Real paid leave wouldn't ignore the growing need for elder care, medical leave for our aging workforce or the needs of people with disabilities and their families.

Real paid leave wouldn't ask working people to trade retirement security for the ability to care for their families.

Real paid leave wouldn't leave workers without any employment protections, which are critical for the two in five workers not covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Here's how you can help: Tell your members of Congress to defend working families and preserve Social Security by opposing the risky proposal to redirect Social Security funds for parental leave and by instead supporting the FAMILY Act (H.R.947/S.337) for real, inclusive paid family and medical leave.

#### **What you can do:**

- ▶ [Contact your members of Congress](#) and ask them to co-sponsor the FAMILY Act (H.R.947/S.337), which would create a strong, inclusive national paid family and medical leave program, and oppose raiding Social Security to pay for inadequate parents-only paid leave.
- ▶ Call the Capitol Switchboard to be connected to your representatives: (202) 224-3121.
- ▶ Write a letter or send an email: You can find your legislators' contact information at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).
- ▶ Visit [www.WeTweet.org](http://www.WeTweet.org): Enter your zip code to find your members of Congress and automatically send a tweet in support of the FAMILY Act.

#### **What you should tell your members of Congress:**

- ▶ The FAMILY Act would create a national paid family and medical leave program that guarantees working people up to 12 weeks of paid leave to bond with a new child, care for their own or a family member's serious health condition, or address military family needs related to active duty deployment.
- ▶ The FAMILY Act is modeled on successful state programs and works for families and businesses.
- ▶ Paid leave and Social Security are both important and people should not be asked to trade one for the other. Congress should not raid Social Security to provide paid leave benefits for new parents, and should instead provide funds to the Social Security Administration to shore up its infrastructure.

Thanks for all you do,

## Sample Call Script

**Use this sample script for calls and other communication with Congress.** Be sure to note your full name and affiliation (i.e., constituent in a particular state, business leader, professor, organization, etc.) and provide your contact information in all outreach.

### **SAMPLE CALL SCRIPT FOR CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH**

- ▶ My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am [note City/State Name if applicable and affiliation].
- ▶ I'm calling today to ask [Rep. X/Sen. X] to support a strong, inclusive national paid family and medical leave plan and oppose a proposal that forces harmful choices between paid parental leave and Social Security.
- ▶ Please co-sponsor the Family And Medical Insurance Leave Act (the FAMILY Act) (H.R.947/S.337), which has been introduced by Representative DeLauro and Senator Gillibrand.
- ▶ We urgently need a national paid leave program like the FAMILY Act that helps all of our families. We can't have one that excludes working people who provide elder care, who have seriously ill family members or who have their own health condition.
- ▶ Access to paid family and medical leave really matters to [me/the people I'm representing/my community] because [key reason or tell your own or a member's/supporter's personal story].
  - ▶ *It is especially important to highlight stories about the need for family caregiving leave and personal medical leave.*
- ▶ But families should not be forced to choose between a secure retirement and paid leave to care for themselves and their families. We need both. That's why I support the FAMILY Act.
- ▶ Please ask [Rep. X/Sen. X] to co-sponsor the FAMILY Act and oppose any proposal that would raid Social Security to pay for paid leave.
  - ▶ *If the staff member expresses concerns or has questions about the bill and you aren't sure how to answer, note that you'll get back to them. Contact Michelle McGrain (mmgrain@nationalpartnership.org) who can help you respond.*
  - ▶ *Please send relevant feedback and questions from the congressional office to Michelle.*
- ▶ I will call back to see what [Rep. X's/Sen. X's] decision is. Thank you for your time.
  - ▶ *Be sure to follow up within a week. Consistent contact is an effective way to demonstrate that you take this issue seriously.*

**Members of Congress who would like to become co-sponsors of the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, should contact:**

**Keith Castaldo**  
 General Counsel  
 Office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand  
 Keith\_Castaldo@gillibrand.senate.gov  
 202-224-4451

**Liz Albertine**  
 Legislative Director  
 Office of Rep. Rosa DeLauro  
 Elizabeth.Albertine@mail.house.gov  
 202-225-3661

## Letter to the Editor Templates

**Please consider working with your organization's members and supporters to submit letters to the editor (LTEs) to raise awareness of the need for paid family and medical**

**leave, specifically the FAMILY Act, and to oppose the proposal to use Social Security to fund parental leave.**

## **PAID LEAVE AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: It is encouraging that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle increasingly recognize that we need to solve the paid leave crisis, and that paid leave is a rare issue on which both parties could truly work together. But details matter tremendously.

Paid leave is especially important to me because [share your personal story].

That's why I'm so concerned that one of the proposals under discussion would take funds out of Social Security to create a limited parental leave-only program. People who take just three months of paid leave would have to delay their retirement by nearly six months or face a substantial cut in their retirement benefits, and there would be no new revenue added to the system.

No one should be asked to trade their retirement security for the ability to care for their family.

Fortunately, there's a better alternative: The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R.947/S.337), modeled on successful state programs, would establish a sustainably funded, national paid leave insurance program to guarantee workers some pay when they need time to recover from their own serious illness or care for a new child or a sick family member.

[State's senators] should stand up for [City/State Name] working families by supporting the FAMILY Act and opposing a reckless proposal that would endanger Social Security.

Sincerely,

[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

*Approx. word count: 223*

## **FAMILY CAREGIVING LEAVE**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: I'm glad that [state's senators] are joining the national debate about paid leave. But I'm worried that family caregivers like me will be forgotten if Congress advances a policy that only provides parental leave, like the proposal to use Social Security funds to pay for a parental leave program.

I'm one of the 85 percent of workers in this country without paid family leave through my employer. I've also spent the last [number of days/months/years] caring for my [sick/aging/dying parent; family member with a serious health condition or disability; wounded warrior]. I am increasingly faced with impossible choices. Do I focus on the needs of my [family member] who needs more care every day, or do I abandon that responsibility so I can keep a roof over my family's head? No one should have to answer that question.

That's why I believe the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R.947/S.337) is the policy our nation needs. The FAMILY Act is modeled after successful programs in four states, and would establish an inclusive national paid leave insurance program to guarantee workers some pay when they need time to help a [describe family member], bond with a new child or recover from a serious illness of their own.

To truly address our nation's paid leave crisis, Congress should create an inclusive program that helps all our families by addressing the full range of caregiving responsibilities families have, including caring for a [sick/aging/dying parent; family member with a serious health condition; family member with a disability; wounded warrior]. We don't need a divisive proposal that covers the needs of new parents but ignores family caregivers and jeopardizes our Social Security.

I hope [state's senators] stand up for all working families and family caregivers by prioritizing the FAMILY Act.

Sincerely,

[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

*Approx. word count: 301*

## **MEDICAL LEAVE**

Dear Editor,

[Article Reference] from [Date]: I'm one of the 60 percent of U.S. workers without access to paid medical leave for an extended illness through my employer. So, when I was [diagnosed with illness/had a serious accident] – instead of focusing on my [recovery/treatment] – I wondered how I was going to pay the bills and keep my family afloat without any income.

No one should have to ask that question, yet there are countless people like me here in [State Name] and millions of people across the nation grappling with the same, dire dilemma. In fact, 71 percent of voters say they too worry that a new child or serious illness could mean significant financial hardship.

That's why I believe the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R.947/S.337), which is currently before Congress, is so vitally important. The FAMILY Act would establish an affordable, comprehensive national paid leave insurance program to guarantee workers some pay when they need time off to care for a new child, help a sick family member, or, like me, recover from a serious [illness or injury].

I urge [state's congressional delegation/or specific member of Congress] to stand up for all working people and their families by supporting the FAMILY Act.

Sincerely,

[Name; Address; City, State; Phone Number; Email Address]

*Word count: Approx. 204*