

## Insights



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## Raising the Topic of Paid Parental Leave

By [Michelle W. Johnson](#)  
Workforce Magazine

In an article published in the March / April 2019 issue of Workforce Magazine, Atlanta partner Michelle Johnson discusses proposed legislation regarding paid family leave.

“There is a growing consensus that paid family leave provides tangible economic and social benefits to both workers and their employers,” Johnson states.

According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, paid leave increases the likelihood that workers will return to work after childbirth, improves employee morale, reduces costs to employers through improved employee retention and increases family incomes, which in turn reduces government spending on public assistance programs. Members of both political parties have expressed support for federal legislation requiring such leave.

The Family and Medical Insurance Leave, or FAMILY Act, was originally introduced in 2013 and re-introduced in 2017 by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and would provide workers with up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave each year. “FAMILY Act benefits would equal 66 percent of an individual’s monthly wages up to a cap and would range from \$580 to a maximum of \$4,000 per month,” Johnson explains.

The Republican proposal for paid family leave would be funded from the Social Security Trust Fund, rather than additional payroll taxes. The Economic Security for New Parents Act (S. 3345) was introduced by Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., in 2018 and would allow parents to use their Social Security retirement benefits, up to 70 percent of their current salary, for 12 weeks after the birth or adoption of a child.

“Recipients would repay the advance by either postponing retirement for three to six months or accepting a small but permanent reduction in their retirement benefit,” Johnson shares. “There would be no new taxes under this proposal, as parental leave would be funded by drawing on participants’ Social Security benefits.”

Neither proposal has enough support to pass in 2019, but there is reason to believe that Congress may find a compromise this year. Given the bipartisan support for some form of paid family leave program, passage of family leave legislation may finally be on the horizon.

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