



# Voters' Views on Paid Family + Medical Leave

Findings from a National Survey

October 2018

## Methods.

National survey of n = 1004 registered voters.

Conducted July 9-23, 2018.

Using NORC's AmeriSpeak nationally representative panel at the University of Chicago.

Margin of sampling error on the total results: +/- 4.3 percentage points.

Commissioned by the National Partnership for Women & Families.

Research firms PerryUndem (non-partisan) and Bellwether (Republican) developed the survey and conducted the analysis.

Prior to the survey, PerryUndem and Bellwether conducted 8 focus groups with conservative-leaning voters in September 2017 in four sites: Dallas, Las Vegas, Richmond VA, and Steelville MO (rural).

## Summary.

**8 in 10 voters support a comprehensive national paid family and medical leave policy that covers all people who work (84%).**

Most Democrats (94%), Independents (83%), and Republicans (74%) support a national policy that would cover all working people who need leave to care for a newborn or newly adopted child; their own serious illness or injury; a seriously ill, injured, elderly, or disabled family member; or to deal with the effects of a deployment or injury of a military service member.

# Summary.

**More than 6 in 10 voters say they would face serious financial hardship if they had to take up to a few months of unpaid leave for family or medical reasons (66%).**

In fact, more than 4 in 10 say it is very *likely* they would face serious financial hardship (42%). Women (48% very *likely*) are much more likely than men (35%) to say they would face serious financial hardship if they had to take unpaid leave.

**8 in 10 feel the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) needs an update (82%).**

After hearing a description and learning the FMLA, which provides unpaid leave, is 25 years old, a majority of Democrats (94%), Independents (80%), and Republicans (71%) feel our national policy for family and medical leave should be updated.

**Half of voters (53%) believe they could benefit from a national paid family and medical leave policy now or in the future and another 19% of voters don't rule it out.**

Younger voters (18-44 years old) are most likely to think they could be helped by a national paid leave policy (72%). Of those who think they might need paid leave at some point:

- 65% said they might use it to care for an elderly, seriously ill, injured, or disabled family member;
- 57% think they might need leave to treat or recover a serious illness of their own;
- 39% think they might need leave to care for a new baby or adopted child.

## Summary.

### **Voters prefer paying for a national paid family and medical leave policy through a shared cost between employers and employees.**

Republican voters are most likely to prefer this funding option (42%), although it is also the top choice of Independent (37%) and Democratic (35%) voters. Of note, hardly any voters (3%) prefer the option of drawing early from Social Security to pay for leave. Also, 1 in 10 (11%) chose the option, "I do not support a national paid family and medical leave policy." Here is how the various funding methods tested:

- 38% A shared contribution between employers and employees
- 21% Employers or companies only funding it
- 19% Federal budget funds, even if it means a tax increase
- 3% Individuals drawing early from Social Security
- 2% Employees only funding it

# Summary.

**After considering four ideas for a national paid family and medical leave policy, the top choice is the comprehensive “Personal and Family Security Fund” (80% support this plan).<sup>1</sup>**

This plan makes paid leave available to *all* workers who need time away from work to care for a new child; their own illness; an ill family member; or to deal with the impacts of a military deployment. It would be paid for through shared employer and employee contributions that go into a national fund, and would allow up to 12 weeks of leave at 66 percent of their regular pay.

When asked to rank the four policy ideas from best to worst, the Personal and Family Security Fund was the top choice for Democrats (68%), Independents (61%), and Republicans (60%).

**The least popular idea is the “Social Security Parental Leave Program” (58% oppose this plan).<sup>2</sup>**

This plan offers paid leave to parents of a new child and would require workers to draw early from Social Security to pay for it. A parent of a new child could take up to 12 weeks of leave per year and receive on average 45 percent of their pay. Individuals would need to delay their retirement by about 25 weeks for each 12 weeks of leave or see a cut in their Social Security retirement benefits if they retire earlier.

<sup>1</sup>The “Personal and Family Security Fund” is actually the FAMILY Act (Family And Medical Insurance Leave Act), a national paid leave proposal sponsored by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D – CT.) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D – NY).

<sup>2</sup>The “Social Security Parental Leave Program” is actually the plan developed by the Independent Women’s Forum and is closely related to the “Economic Security for New Parents Act” recently introduced by Marco Rubio (R-FL) and sponsored by Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO).

## Summary.

**Most voters (70%) believe that political party shouldn't matter when it comes to supporting a national paid family and medical leave policy.**

The majority of Democrats (86%), Independents (66%), and Republicans (54%) agree that "Regardless of which political party you identify with more, your party should support a comprehensive national paid family and medical leave policy that covers all working people."

**7 in 10 say they are more likely to vote for a 2018 Congressional candidate who publicly supports a national paid family and medical leave policy (70%).**

Most Democrats (86%), Independents (66%), and Republicans (58%) say this.

**Conversely, close to two-thirds (64%) say they are less likely to vote for a 2018 Congressional candidate who publicly opposes a national paid family and medical leave policy.**

Majorities of Democrats (77%), Independents (60%) and Republicans (53%) feel this way.