

New York passes family leave mandate

By Erin Moriarty-Siler

Starting January 1, 2018, new parents in New York will have something to celebrate: [paid parental leave](#).

New York joins California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island as the latest state to mandate paid leave. That said, at 12 weeks paid time off, New York's leave is the most generous in the country, doubling the time California and New Jersey offers, and tripling that of Rhode Island's paid leave. Washington also passed a family leave measure in 2007, but has yet to implement it. (Should Washington D.C. put in place its proposed **family leave plan**, it will take the top spot from New York with 16 weeks of paid leave.)

Only 12 percent of American employees currently have access to paid family leave through their employers, and its distribution is anything but even. According to Vox, 5 percent of workers in the lowest-paid 25 percent of the workforce have it, while 22 percent of the top 10 percent of earners do.

New York's mandate covers all of its citizens – women, men, full-time, part-time – under the new family leave policy, which will be funded by a small paycheck contribution amounting to about one dollar a week. Translation: Employers and taxpayers aren't footing the bill.

As far as logistics go, the plan will be phased in beginning in 2018, starting at eight weeks at 50 percent of pay, and finally reaching 12 weeks at 67 percent of pay in 2021. It's not exactly the 40 weeks at 90 percent pay that the U.K. enjoys, but it definitely is a step in the right direction.

Removing the gender bias (as well as biological bias — foster and adoptive parents will receive the same benefit) is also a monumental move for the New York mandate, one that more accurately encompasses current American families.

While child rearing is still largely considered a “female duty,” there is a growing number of stay-at-home fathers, with a 2009 statistic showing 1.4 million men act as the in-home primary caregiver, a number that doubled in just a decade.

Providing leave to parents regardless of gender is in line with the shifting parental duties of the 21st century, but may also have a grander implications in terms of overall equality. Despite the societal acceptance of women in the office and men in the home, women are on the losing end of the **pay gap**. If the government is ready to see men as caregivers, perhaps corporate America will be ready to see women as equal earners.

As Rebecca Traister put it: “Paid leave has the potential to make men and women closer to equal in both their range of responsibilities and the support to which they feel entitled, both from the government and from each other.”

Source: <http://www.benefitspro.com>