

PRESS RELEASE



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NEW: The Nation: Americans Got a Taste of Paid Leave. Will They Get It for Real?

“When a Crisis Hits this isn’t a Political Issue, this isn’t a Partisan Issue.”

Washington, DC — [The Nation’s](#) Bryce Covert spoke with Paid Leave Director Dawn Huckelbridge and other key experts about the momentum building to pass a permanent, national paid leave policy. Many American workers briefly gained access to paid leave for the first time during the pandemic -- when Congress passed a temporary, emergency paid sick leave mandate as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act last spring.

Now, advocates are elevating the historic opportunity to include a national paid leave policy in President Biden’s forthcoming infrastructure package.

Read more in [The Nation](#):

Local paid-leave campaigns like the one in Milwaukee had laid a foundation long before the pandemic hit. Today, 13 states and Washington, D.C., plus another 19 cities and three counties, have enacted their own sick leave guarantees. Nine states and Washington, D.C., have paid family leave programs. When Covid-19 started rampaging across the country, “Congress realized they had to act,” [Ellen] Bravo said. “That was a result of our movement, years of years of struggle and victories.”

Lawmakers acted with urgency. “From the outset, policymakers agreed in a bipartisan fashion that paid sick and family leave was a necessary component of addressing the public health crisis

and the care crisis,” said Vicki Shabo, senior fellow for paid leave policy and strategy at the New America foundation. It was a notable shift. “When a crisis hits this isn’t a political issue, this isn’t a partisan issue,” Huckelbridge said. “That in itself shows there was a clear recognition that this was a hole in our system.”

It also helped the public recognize the same thing. “It’s on the agenda in a way that it wasn’t before,” Shabo said. “The taste of this has created a new awareness that this is something government can do.”

Families First paid leave saved lives. One study found that the sick leave reduced cases by around 400 a day.

But it could have done more good had it been a stronger policy. Despite support for the policy among Republican lawmakers, then-Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia expanded a carve-out for healthcare workers to such an extent that virtually none could qualify. He also excluded more small businesses than in the original legislation. A judge later ruled both exclusions illegal. The agency’s inspector general also later found the agency did little to enforce compliance and didn’t do enough outreach to eligible workers. In the end, the carve-outs meant an estimated 106 million workers weren’t able to use the paid leave.

Read the full story [here](#).

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The Paid Leave for All campaign is a growing collaborative of organizations fighting for paid family and medical leave for all working people. Learn more about Paid Leave for All [here](#).