

NY can lead on paid new-parent leave

The state would set a national example if it adopts this long-ignored policy

BY CHRISTOPHER DALE

Two friends recently had their first child. Both have white-collar jobs in Manhattan. From his employer, the proud papa received several weeks of paid time off. For her part, to maintain a reasonable income stream, the new mom burned through vacation days and sick time rather than declaring herself “disabled” to the State of New York. Once those were spent, she worked from home for several more weeks while caring for a newborn.

The couple’s widely disparate treatment as new parents underscores a system in drastic need of both increased fairness and decreased complexity. State by state and company by company, new-parent leave laws and policies are a muddled mess. And now that New York has a Democrat-controlled State Legislature, perhaps something meaningful can be done about it.

New parents have more important things to worry about than inadequate and wildly inconsis-

tent leave policies. On top of the stresses of preparing for a new baby, expecting parents often find themselves concocting complicated scenarios to maximize time at home while minimizing economic disruption.

Some large companies are trying to change this. In August, Microsoft updated its policy and insisted upon improvements for its vendors. Most companies that do work for the tech giant must now offer employees a minimum of 12 weeks paid parental leave.

New York can, and should, be the first state government to enact similar policy. Here’s why.

Federally, the Family and Medical Leave Act provides up to 12 weeks of leave for new mothers and fathers. This leave is only available to new parents who have been with their current employer for a full year, and is completely unpaid. Meanwhile, only four states — California, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Rhode Island — offer some form of publicly funded leave specific to new parents.

In New York, new-parent



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leave is tied to the state Paid Family Leave Act, of 2016. Though the law is a step forward in providing job security to employees requiring time off for various family-related reasons, the financial support it provides sounds better than it is. Financed by state taxpayers, payments are tied to a percentage of the state’s average weekly income. For 2019, the maximum a recipient is allowed is about \$718 per week. That doesn’t go very far in the New York City metro area — and many will receive significantly less.

So why shouldn’t employers make up the rest?

New York is the ideal state to start a trend toward codifying paid time off — completely paid time off. As California led with fuel efficiency because it has the most cars, New York, still the nation’s economic, financial services and media engine, can lead on new-parent leave because such a swath of its companies are profitable and resource-rich.

And since many New York employers thrive in a hyper-competitive job market, they also have ample reason to offer

paid leave for new parents: employee attraction and retention.

Furthermore, a lot has happened since New York’s 2016 law. A full-pay leave law in the state could, among other measures, lead to companies making good on what Republican leaders promised: that their windfall \$1.5 trillion tax cut would spur increased wages. It would also help close gender-based wage discrepancies, providing moms and dads an equal playing field in terms of income consistency.

A paid new-parent leave law need not be complicated. Employers would make up the difference — the whole difference, based on actual salaries — of what public funds do not cover. The time frame can be clearer — say, three months for one parent (usually the mom) and a month for the other (usually the dad), with additional unpaid time off available per federal law.

New York can, and should, be the first to get it right on this long-ignored family issue.



Christopher Dale is a freelance writer who writes on society, politics and sobriety-based issues.



A pothole in Northport on Jan. 4.

A few years ago, there was a huge pothole on Red Brook Road in Great Neck. I perceived that it was rather dangerous so I drove around the block, maybe 300 yards, and went into the Great Neck public works facility. I told three

employees there about the pothole. They thanked me and told me they would call the Nassau County public works department.

Obviously I was flabbergasted, the hole being just around the corner and they

weren’t busy. They nicely explained they couldn’t touch it because that part of the road was run by the county, and that a repair truck would come from East Meadow. Four days later, the hole was repaired.

I still find this incident to be beyond my comprehension.

Ron Baron,
Cold Spring Harbor

Responding to proposed border wall

I read a page of letters about the building of the wall on the Southern border [“Readers weigh in on the wall,” Letters, Jan. 10]. I am surprised that not one letter was relevant to the issue. The real issue is about democracy. In our democracy, the side that has the most votes should win. Does President Donald Trump have the votes to support his position? Of course not. If he had the votes, the wall would be built.

When Judge Brett Kavanaugh was being considered for the Supreme Court, he was opposed by Democrats. They made a compelling argument against him, but Democrats lost because they did not have the votes.

Democracy should respect voting. If Trump had the votes, he wouldn’t need a temper tantrum and a government shutdown.

Ralph Daino,
Wantagh

The letters from readers about the wall were provocative. Kudos to Newsday for stating how many responses were received and the percentage of those in favor of the issue.

Edward Dermon,
Roslyn Heights

According to Rep. Will Hurd (R-Texas), some of the safest communities in the United States exist on the Texas-Mexico

border. I was unaware the garden of Eden for the United States was on our southern border. Who would have thunk it?

Tom Tierney,
Greenlawn

Is it smart to hire an IG for Oyster Bay?

Let me get this straight. The cash-strapped Town of Oyster Bay needs to spend \$135,000 a year for someone to oversee what the supervisor and town council members were elected to do [“Oyster Bay appoints new inspector general,” News, Jan. 8]. Is it that they don’t trust themselves to do the job they are paid for and protect the taxpayers from corruption?

Unbelievable.

Peter Zabielski,
Farmingdale

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