

KYGA 2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

PAID LEAVE

ACLU
Kentucky

2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

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PAID LEAVE

OVERVIEW

The US lags far behind other developed nations in offering paid parental leave. Globally, 63% of countries now provide women at least 14 weeks of paid leave, with countries like Germany, Sweden, and France implementing paid maternity leave over a century ago. New mothers in India, Cuba or Gambia get six months paid leave. In Japan new parents can take a year, and some European countries offer even longer.

But in the US, new parents are guaranteed no paid leave at all.

Although 75% of Americans support paid leave, the US has not passed a federal paid leave policy. Some state legislatures are filling the gap, even in the South. But Kentucky is far behind our Southern peers — we are one of only seven southern states without a paid leave policy, and one of only 15 US states without one. This lack of support for new families has devastating consequences for Kentuckians, public health, and the commonwealth's economy.



PAID LEAVE

OVERVIEW (CONT.)

Around 1.5 million — or about 80% of — working Kentuckians don't have access to paid leave through their employer. Even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 62% of working Kentuckians.

Kentucky is a forced pregnancy state with some of the worst maternal and infant health outcomes in the world. Studies show paid leave is linked with better maternal and infant health outcomes, reduces infant mortality, and increases vaccination and breastfeeding rates.

Research shows paid leave also has numerous benefits for employers. It improves employee retention, reduces workforce turnover, and improves worker productivity and morale — ultimately saving employers and businesses money and supporting economic growth and development.

Kentucky families shouldn't have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family. Paid leave is a commonsense solution that strengthens Kentucky families, economies, and communities.

It's time to expand access to paid leave to ALL Kentuckians.

TALKING POINTS

TOP LINES:

- The US is one of the only countries on the planet that does not offer access to paid parental or family leave. Kentuckians should never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family.
- A lack of paid leave has devastating consequences for Kentucky families, public health, and the economy.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- Around 1.5 million — or about 80% of — working Kentuckians do not have access to paid leave through their employer.
- Even unpaid leave (under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act) is inaccessible for 62% of working Kentuckians.
- Surveys show nearly 75% of Americans support paid leave.

PAID LEAVE IS A MATERNAL HEALTH ISSUE:

- A lack of paid leave directly relates to the disproportionately high maternal and infant mortality rates among Black Kentuckians.
- Paid leave significantly increases rates of breastfeeding and vaccination.
- Studies suggest the chance of a new mother with access to paid leave reduces their re-hospitalization rate by 51 percent, and their infants' chance of being re-hospitalized in the first year by 47 percent.

PAID LEAVE IS A RACE AND GENDER ISSUE:

- The average Kentuckian who takes four weeks of unpaid leave loses nearly \$2,900 in income.
- The extensive wealth gap between white and Black Americans means Black Americans are more likely to lack the necessary resources to absorb a temporary loss of income if required to take unpaid time off work.
- Without access to paid leave, women — especially women of color — suffer the most.

TALKING POINTS

PAID LEAVE IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE:

- Research shows paid leave has numerous benefits for employers. It improves employee retention, reduces workforce turnover, and improves worker productivity and morale — ultimately saving employers and businesses money.
- Paid leave also improves health outcomes for workers and their families, reduces healthcare costs, and supports economic growth and development.

WHAT WE WANT:

- More Kentuckians with access to paid family and medical leave.
- A paid leave policy that include ALL parents to ensure LGBTQ+ families have equal access to paid leave and to address the wage gap between genders and races.
- A paid leave policy that comes at no or minimal cost to employees.
- A paid leave policy as generous as possible, but ideally no less than 4 weeks.

SOCIAL MEDIA

When posting about legislative issues, always check the ACLU of Kentucky's channels for content to share! We are @ACLUofKY on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#). Following our feed is the best way to find up-to-date information and graphics. If you want to make your own posts about this issue, here is some sample text. Add personal stories and details to make more impact!

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: FACEBOOK

Have you ever needed time off to care for your child or family, but didn't take it because you couldn't afford it?

The US is one of the only countries on the planet that does not offer access to paid parental or family leave. Kentuckians should never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family. Call your legislator to tell them to support paid leave for Kentuckians: 1-800-372-7181.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: TWITTER/X (280 CHARACTER LIMIT)

Kentuckians should never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family. Call your legislator to tell them to support paid leave for Kentuckians: 1-800-372-7181. #kyga24

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: INSTAGRAM (VISUAL FIRST)

Kentuckians should never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family. Call your legislator to tell them to support paid leave for Kentuckians: 1-800-372-7181.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: THREADS (500 CHARACTER LIMIT)

Have you ever needed time off to care for your child or family, but didn't take it because you couldn't afford it? The US is one of the only countries on the planet that does not offer access to paid parental or family leave.

Kentuckians should never have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family. Call your legislator to tell them to support paid leave for Kentuckians: 1-800-372-7181. #kyga24

SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS

To use these images, right click on them and select “save as image” or “copy image” and save the graphic to your phone or computer.



TRADITIONAL MEDIA

SAMPLE OP-ED - AIM FOR 500-750 WORDS

A variety of individuals write opinion articles, or op-eds, for news media to share. Sometimes they are certified experts, sometimes they are everyday people who feel strongly about an issue. These brief essays can help the audience better understand a complicated issue or help them relate to something they haven't personally experienced. These pieces can be extremely powerful and persuasive.

If you would like assistance reviewing, drafting, editing, or pitching an op-ed to newspapers, reach out to someone on the communications team. We are happy to help!

FORMS OF PERSUASION (USE ONE OR MORE):

- a. **Personal Experience:** The writer describes an experience he or she has had.
- b. **Expert Opinion:** The writer draws on the opinion of an expert—someone trained in a particular area, or someone who has relevant personal experience.
- c. **Example:** The writer provides an example that supports a larger idea or pattern.
- d. **Analogy:** The writer compares the situation to another similar situation.
- e. **Facts and Statistics:** The writer uses facts or numbers to prove their idea. Often this information comes from other sources, such as books, newspapers, or websites.
- f. **Logic:** The writer uses reasoning or logic to argue their point.
- g. **Emotion:** The writer makes an emotional appeal to the reader.

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Hook:** The beginning is your chance to capture your reader's attention. What can you start with that will compel your audience to pay attention? Perhaps an anecdote or surprising fact?
- b. **Context:** Now back up a little bit. Explain what the issue is at hand. In a few lines, provide some background and context.

HOW TO WRITE AN OP-ED

- c. **Thesis:** Finally, make an argument. Tell your reader where you stand on this issue.
 - **Example:** “New parents get up to one year off to bond with their baby in many countries. But here, in the wealthiest nation on Earth, I only got a few weeks.”

II. FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #1:** Describe the central piece of evidence that supports your position.
- b. **Tie Back:** Make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.
 - **Example:** “Paid leave is a maternal and infant health issue. Studies show paid time off increases breast feeding and vaccination rates and decreases hospitalization rates among new parents and infants. I was unable to breastfeed my child because I had to work.”

III. SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #2:** Describe a second piece of evidence that supports your position. Try using a different type of persuasion (see list below).
- b. **Tie Back:** Again, make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.
 - **Example:** “Paid leave is also a race and gender issue. The wealth disparity between white and Black Americans is already huge — our family couldn’t afford to absorb the temporary loss of income, and my health, and my child’s health, suffered because of structural inequalities.”

IV. THIRD BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Counter Argument:** What would be the main argument of the opposing side?
- b. **Rebuttal:** What is your response to this argument? Why doesn’t it apply to this situation/context?
 - **Example:** “Many say paid leave shouldn’t be the government’s responsibility — it should be up to the employer. But without laws mandating paid leave, most employers won’t spend time or resources to implement this policy.”

V. CONCLUSION

- a. **Summary:** In just a few lines, remind your reader of the main argument and evidence.
- b. **Thesis:** No need to repeat your thesis word-for-word but remind readers what you're arguing and why they should care.
- c. **Personal Comment, Call to Action, or Question:** The last few sentences of your essay will linger in your reader's mind? What do you want to leave them with?
 - **Example:** "Having access to paid leave would have strengthened my bond with my baby, improved both my health and their's, and given both me and my employer the peace of mind that I could return to work safe, happy, and healthy, saving all of us money. Paid leave is a win for parents, public health, and the economy, and it's past time for all Kentuckians to have access to paid time off."

SCRIPTS

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Every call counts! When you call legislators to tell them how you would like them to vote on a certain bill, they receive a physical piece of green or red paper, representing your view. Many lawmakers say they are influenced by how many green or red slips they receive. These slips are what make phone calls so effective.
- Calling the legislative message line is toll-free and only takes a few minutes. Call every day if you have the time. You don't even have to know your legislators' names but be prepared to share your address so operators can send your message to the right place.

1-800-372-7181

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

- My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am calling to voice my strong opposition to/support for [BILL NUMBER], or any legislation that threatens freedom of speech and expression in Kentucky. Thank you.

EMAIL SCRIPT

- My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am emailing to voice my strong opposition to/support for [BILL NUMBER], or any legislation that threatens freedom of speech and expression in Kentucky. Thank you.

TESTIMONY

TELL YOUR STORY

Have you ever wondered who the people are who sit in front of lawmakers in Frankfort to talk about issues affecting our communities? They're everyday Kentuckians who are passionate about making Kentucky a better place for their families, helping communities thrive, and moving Kentucky forward.

Anyone can testify at a committee hearing in Frankfort. Committee hearings are where bills are discussed and voted on, so they can move from their committee assignment to the full legislative chambers. Amendments and bill language can change all the way up to the full vote, and testimony can influence legislators' opinions on how our laws should read.

Everyone is passionate about something, and Kentucky's General Assembly conducts business in committee hearings with real-world implications for everyone who lives here. And while it may seem like a lot of work to prepare testimony, travel to Frankfort, and spend time in a hearing room waiting for lawmakers to hear from us, it is vital to our democracy.

Take paid leave, for example. Lawmakers need to hear from people who are impacted by a lack of paid leave and how their lives would change if they didn't have to choose between their child and a paycheck. Lawmakers can only work with the information they have, and if the people of Kentucky don't talk about how bills will impact them, the legislature will write the laws governing our people without the complete picture.

If you're interested in testifying in Frankfort, let us know! We can help draft, edit, and polish your testimony and even attend the hearing with you (as long as we have available staff that day).

2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

Our work and our democracy depend on participation from all Kentuckians. Help protect democracy in the commonwealth and make your voice heard.

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CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

The Legislative Research Commission was created in 1948 as a fact-finding and service agency. The Commission operates as the administrative and research arm of the General Assembly. At the LRC website, <https://www.legislature.ky.gov>, you can find out who your legislator is, see who has filed bills, read the draft of bills under consideration, view committee schedules and agendas, and more!

LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1-800-372-7181

WATCH LIVE LEGISLATIVE COVERAGE ON KET

Kentucky Educational Television (KET) is Kentucky's largest classroom, serving more than two million people each week via television, online, and mobile.

Most Kentuckians can't travel to Frankfort to testify or meet in person with legislators. KET live streams committee hearings and activity on the House and Senate floors for free, so anyone can watch and listen to the issues being discussed first-hand. Learn more at www.ket.org.