# Senators Join In Renewed Efforts to Give Feds Paid Family Leave

         By [Erich Wagner](https://www.govexec.com/voices/erich-wagner/12880/)

         April 12, 2019

Democrats in the Senate introduced legislation this week that would provide federal employees paid time off if they need to care for themselves or family members.

The bill ([S. 1174](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1174/)), introduced by Sens. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii; Chris Van Hollen, D-Md.; Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio; and Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., mirrors bipartisan legislation already unveiled in the House.

The 2019 Federal Employees Paid Leave Act ([H.R. 1534](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1534/text)) would provide 12 weeks of paid time off for any federal worker who has, adopts or fosters a child; needs to care for an ill spouse, child or parent or attend to their own serious medical condition; or faces certain circumstances after a parent, child or spouse is placed on active military duty.

The House bill, [introduced](https://www.govexec.com/pay-benefits/2019/03/lawmakers-renewed-push-paid-family-leave-feds-includes-more-generous-benefits/155327/) by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., sought to up the ante after previous efforts to provide parental leave to federal employees failed to gain traction, most recently in 2018. Those bills had sought to provide paid leave only in the instance of a federal worker becoming a new parent, and before last year, they only sought six weeks of paid time off.

Still, Maloney acknowledged last month that the provisions of the bill could end up only being a “first offer” in congressional negotiations.

“We thought we’d start out optimistic,” Maloney said at a press conference announcing the bill’s introduction. “If they want to cut it back, they can. There are other types of emergencies in people’s lives.”

Currently, federal employees must use annual leave or unpaid time off through the Family and Medical Leave Act to take care of a new child or ailing family member.

Federal employee unions applauded the effort to ensure the bill gains traction in both chambers of Congress.

“Federal employees currently receive no paid time off for the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child, or to address other family medical emergencies,” American Federation of Government Employees National President J. David Cox said. “Because of this, every day there are hundreds—if not thousands—of federal workers facing the agonizing choice between paying the bills and meeting a critical family need: whether it’s bonding with a newly arrived child, caring for a seriously ill or injured family member, tending to their own health condition, or handling issues related to a family member’s current or recent military service.”

Since its introduction last month, the House version of the bill has yet to receive a committee vote, although its list of cosponsors has grown to 27, including Republicans.