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Making the Most of Your Money

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Parental Leave: What Does Your Employer Offer?

By TARA SIEGEL BERNARD

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It's an astonishing fact, but the United States is the only country with an advanced economy that does not provide some sort of paid leave for new mothers.

This week's Your Money column takes a closer look at the dismal state of affairs concerning parental leave over all, as well as the patchwork of policies that are on the books (or not).

The Family and Medical Leave Act, which went into effect 20 years ago this month, provides some basic but invaluable protections: it requires larger employers and public agencies to provide up to 12 weeks of *unpaid* leave for the birth or adoption of a child (or to care for yourself, an opposite-sex spouse, parent or child who has fallen ill). But experts say that about 40 percent of employees are not eligible — and many of those who are simply cannot afford to take unpaid leave.

While consumer advocates and some lawmakers are drafting legislation that would create a paid federal family leave and medical leave insurance program, the current political tenor will make passage tricky. In the meantime, whether workers have access to paid leave largely depends on where and for whom they work.

So we've decided to begin a progress report that will highlight paid parental leave policies at American employers (similar to the way we keep track of companies that equalize the cost of health insurance for same-sex couples). We're starting with responses we received from some of the largest companies, which you'll find detailed below.

The chart is still a work in progress and will be updated. (Among the companies we're waiting to hear back from are Exxon Mobil, Wal-Mart, Chevron and Berkshire Hathaway.) So please tell us about your own employer's policy with the form below, or in the comment section. We would also love to hear your thoughts on the potential creation of a paid federal family and medical leave insurance program.

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