

The Record-Courier

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New mothers need time off

It's my first day back to work from maternity leave. My baby is 16 weeks old. Motherhood has, of course, transformed me. I have so many emotions! The biggest one is love. I love my baby. I love my husband! I love my job. I'm so grateful that my company offers a relatively generous parental leave. I'm sad for other mamas who have zero federally mandated parental leave. I cannot imagine going back to work 2 weeks after giving birth like some mamas must after they've burned through all their PTO.

Women are amazing. Birth is unreal. Motherhood is transcendent. Birth obliterates a woman's body. I don't mean this in a superficial way. I mean that my joints hurt. I mean that I'm peeing my pants a couple of times a week to this day, and I know women who deal with this for the rest of their lives. Motherhood transforms a woman's brain and senses. Stress over my baby's well-being is all-consuming at times. My hearing is super attuned to all his sounds, focusing on anything else is sometimes difficult. My vision deteriorated for some reason.

My baby still only eats breast milk, he's changing every day, childcare in my area is all on waitlists for infants, and they are quite expensive. How on earth are women supposed to navigate all of this? They can't. But they do. Women are so powerful. But it's unfair to the extreme.

The USA has no federally mandated maternity leave to be able to care for our babies when they need us the most. We MUST return to work, but childcare is unavailable or, at best, expensive. Our Supreme Court just decided it should be up to your state whether women are in control of when or if they have children! Nearly half of the states in this country are stripping that choice from women to varying degrees.

I personally believe that we should trust women and the care team they choose implicitly with their reproductive freedom. If you don't agree with me, you've just got to support federally mandated maternity leave and free-for-families childcare.

This November, I'm voting for candidates that are champions for women's rights. It can be done; there are various examples in Europe and up north that offer federally mandated-maternity leave for one full year! Let's "make America great" like that. Let's "make America great again" by restoring federal protection of women's rights to start a family if and when she wants.

Finally, without naming names, there is only one presidential candidate that is talking about this stuff. And I'm voting for her. I hope you vote with me. But if you don't, it's ok. I believe in democracy and that everyone deserves their vote. My last ask, though, is that you not be surprised when politicians that champion women's rights win up and down the ballot. We told you this is important to us.

Don't be surprised.

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