

THE WICKER REPORT

By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



Wicker Highlights New Tax Credit for Paid Family Leave

Tax Law Offers Incentive for Employers to Extend These Benefits

Much of the news about the new tax law has been focused on the wave of employee bonuses and wage raises affecting millions of Americans. These announcements from leading companies quickly grabbed headlines following the law's enactment, delivering on the promise that the "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act" would put more money back into the pockets of working Americans.

Such good news is certainly welcome, and there is more of it to share, since the tax law is also working to help Americans keep more of their valuable time with loved ones. The "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act" contains a tax credit for employers to provide paid family and medical leave when employees need to address a serious health issue, care for an aging parent, or bring home a new baby. It marks the first time for the United States to have a family leave policy that is paid.

Tax Credit Has Popular Appeal

Unlike the "Family and Medical Leave Act," which requires up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, the new tax law's provision is not a mandate on businesses but one that

tries to make good business sense. Employers who take advantage of the provision will receive up to a 25 percent tax credit on what they pay toward employee leave. Moreover, by making the credit voluntary and creating a sliding scale that rewards even a partial wage replacement, the tax law recognizes the challenges faced by small businesses who simply cannot afford to give paid family and medical leave to every employee. The law seeks to help the lower-wage earners most likely to lack these benefits. The credit applies only if paid leave goes to employees earning less than \$72,000.

The tax law's approach has wide support beyond the halls of Congress and the White House. In a comprehensive study on paid leave released last year by the Pew Research Center, 87 percent of Americans said they would be in favor of using tax credits to incentivize these benefits. Paid family and medical leave also ranked high among the most desirable workplace benefits.

Tax Law Looks Out for Families

Those of us who voted for the tax law are encouraged by its inclusion of policies that serve the best interests of both American workers and American families. Tax cuts that allow workers to keep more of their take-home pay were not the law's only win. Paid leave can be a game-changer for families struggling to pay their bills amid medical concerns. So could other family-

Mississippi farmers say they'll plant fewer acres in 2018

Associated Press

Mississippi farmers plan to plant less, even though cotton and soybean prices are higher than they were a year ago.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported Thursday that farmers told the department they plan to plant 100,000 fewer acres statewide, down about 2 percent.

Soybean acres are expected to rise slightly to 2.2 million acres. That's more than half

friendly provisions in the law, such as the doubling of the Child Tax Credit and an expansion of 529 savings plans that would give parents more options when it comes to their child's education.

The first tax reform law in a generation should make a big impact, one that goes far beyond the additional money that most employees have started to see in their paychecks. A modernized tax system is an opportunity to

the land Mississippi farmers expect to plant this year.

They plan 580,000 acres of cotton, down 8 percent, even though cotton plantings are rising nationwide.

Agricultural specialists at Mississippi State University say cotton planting could expand if weather cooperates, considering higher prices and a new federal subsidy program for cottonseed.

Corn acreage is expected to fall 6 percent in Mississippi to 490,000 acres. Rice acreage is expected to rise 4 percent.

improve the ways in which Americans live and work, creating a positive environment that cultivates both economic growth and a high quality of life.

County graduates from Hinds CC announced

Hinds Community College graduated more than 1,000 students in three ceremonies Dec. 15 at the Muse Center on the Rankin Campus. Among the graduates, 129 achieved summa cum laude, a 4.0 grade point average; 74 achieved magna cum laude, a 3.6 to 3.99 GPA and 21 achieved cum laude, 3.2 to 3.59.

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