LEADING ON LEAVE:

How States are Shaping the Future of Paid Leave Policy

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About DMEC

- DMEC provides focused education, knowledge, and networking for leave and accommodation management professionals.

- Our community spans hundreds of employer and supplier organizations and more than **20,000 practitioners** across the U.S. and Canada.

- We deliver the insights, tools, and peer connections you need to navigate leave and accommodation administration, compliance, and return-to-work complexities with confidence.

OUR OFFERINGS

- **Expert guidance** on complex topics such as federal, state, and local leave laws;

- **Curated resources** such as policy briefs, webinars, legislative updates, white papers, and up-to-date data, including findings from DMEC surveys;

- **A community of practice** connecting policymakers across states to share best practices;

- **Special events** featuring legal experts, government leaders, and business stakeholders;

- **Targeted trainings, microcredential programs,** and **continuing education** courses.

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- **Paid Parental Leave** offerings rose from 29% (2022) to 42% (2024).
- **22%** of employers offer both Paid Parental and Paid Family Care Leave.
- Employers offering **100% pay** for Paid Parental Leave increased from 83% to 95%.
- **54%** of employers exceed state mandates for continuing health insurance during leave.
- **60%** require employees to use paid leave while on FMLA.
- Many employers now use **STD or Workers' Comp approvals** to streamline FMLA processing.

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STATE LEAVE BASICS

Leave Across the States

- PFML
- SDI
- PFML & SDI
- Private Insurance Legislation
- Extended Unpaid Leave Beyond FMLA
- PFML, SDI & Extended Unpaid Leave
- PFML & Extended Unpaid Leave
- Extended Unpaid Leave and Private Insurance Legislation

- 13 states have some form of paid family or medical leave policy.

- 16 states extend unpaid, job-protected leave beyond the 12-week FMLA requirement.

- Five states have mandatory statutory disability insurance (SDI).

- 10 states allow voluntarily paid leave coverage through a private insurance market.

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Paid and Unpaid Leave Laws

- Paid Medical Leave (PML)
- Paid Family Leave (PFL)
- Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)
- Paid Sick Leave

- Family and Medical Leave
- Domestic Violence Leave
- Crime Victim Leave
- Jury Duty Leave
- Military Leave
- Voting Leave

Components of State Leaves

- Employer Coverage
- Eligibility criteria
- Qualifying relationships
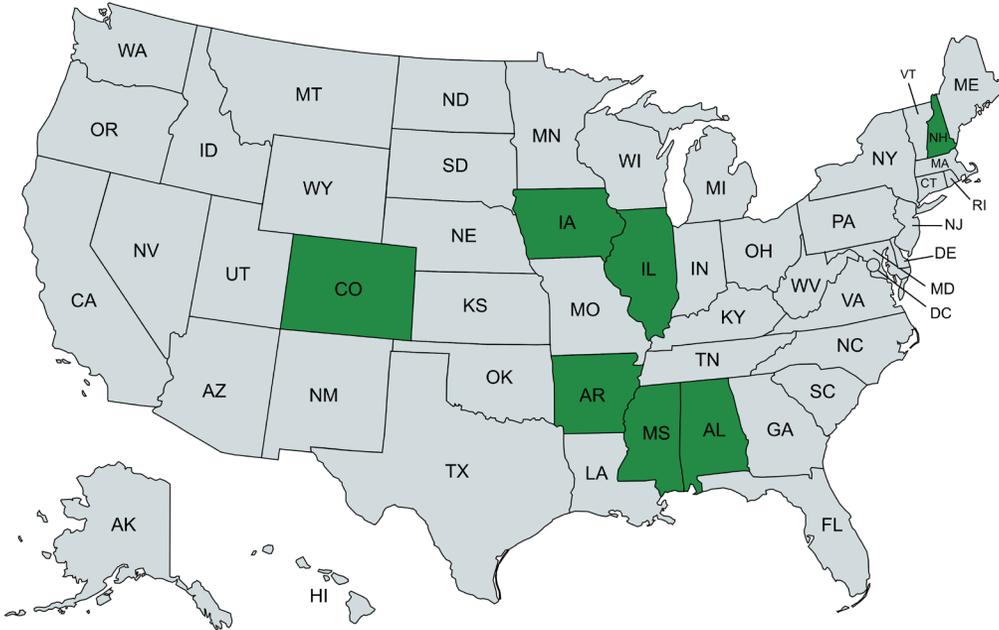- Reasons for leave
- Leave period
- Funding
- Usage caps

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- Expansion of Paid Parental Leave

- Leave for Non-Traditional Events

- Benefits and Wage Replacements

- Leave Eligibility and Defining Family Members

EXPANDED PARENTAL LEAVE

- **Alabama**, **Arkansas**, **Colorado**, **Illinois**, **Iowa**, **Mississippi**, and **New Hampshire** passed legislation expanding paid or unpaid parental leave.

- In 2025, **Arkansas**, **Connecticut**, **Illinois**, **Oregon**, **Rhode Island**, and **Vermont,** among other states, have enacted or operationalized policies expanding leave for non-traditional events such as:

  - Blood donation;

  - Caregiving;

  - Death of a family member or child;

  - Mental Health;

  - Military funeral honors leave;

  - Reproductive health care decisions; and

 - Safe leave, harassment, and domestic violence recovery.
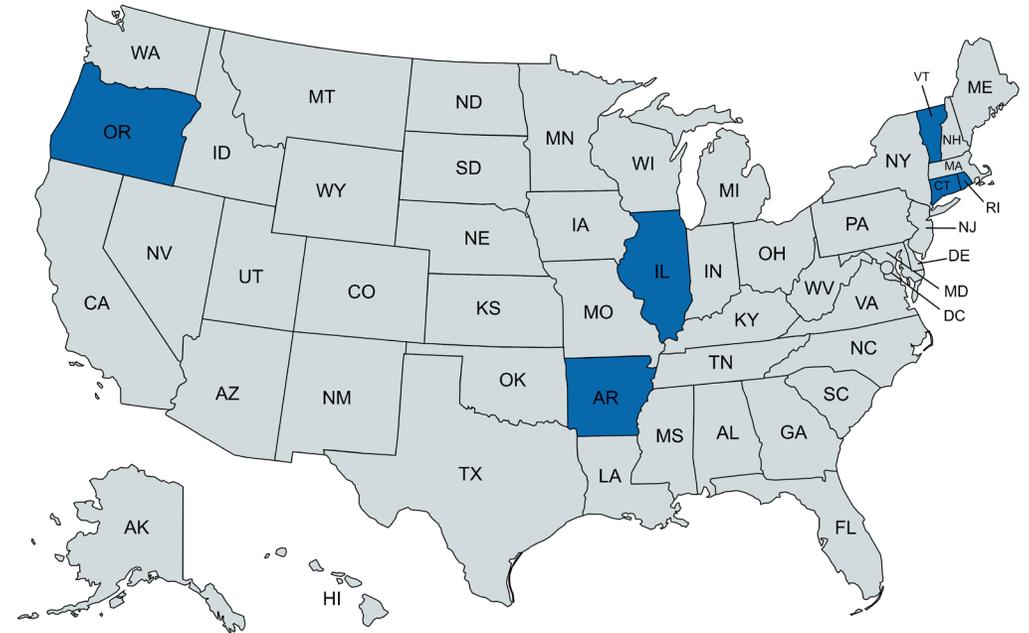
BENEFITS AND WAGE REPLACEMENTS
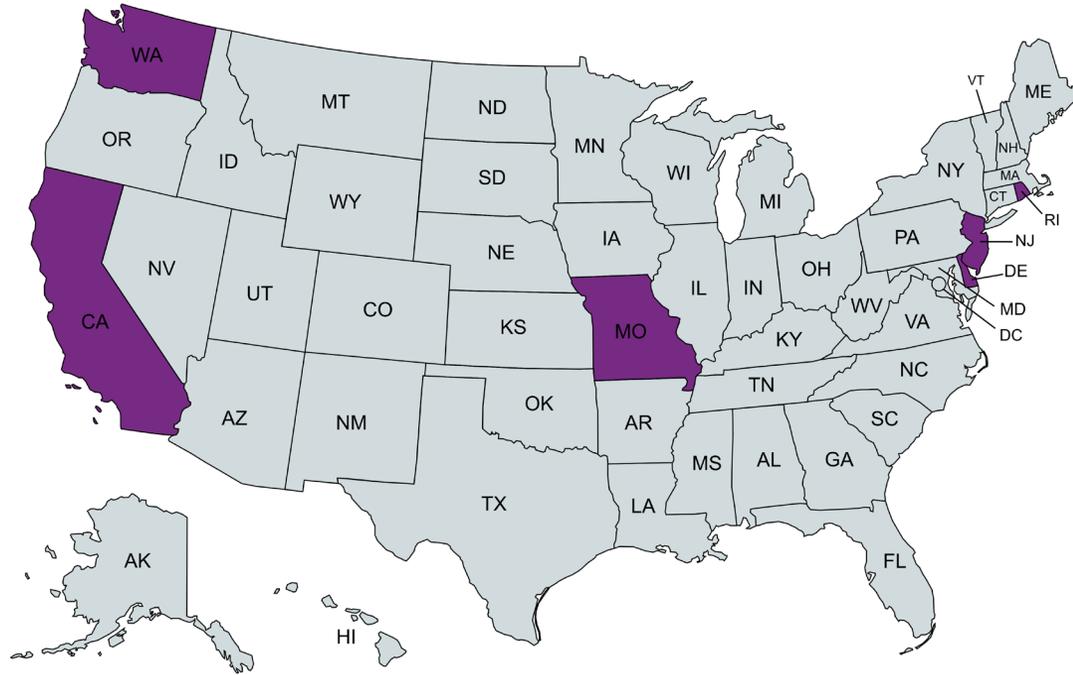
- **California**, **Delaware**, **Missouri**, **New Jersey**, **New York**, **Rhode Island**, **Washington**, among other states, saw changes to benefits rates and wage replacements.

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- **Connecticut**, **Montana**, **New Jersey**, **North Dakota**, and **Texas** amended the state's law regarding eligibility for leave. Some states have added leave benefits for employees holding public office or those who act as volunteer service providers , while others expanded the definition of family members.
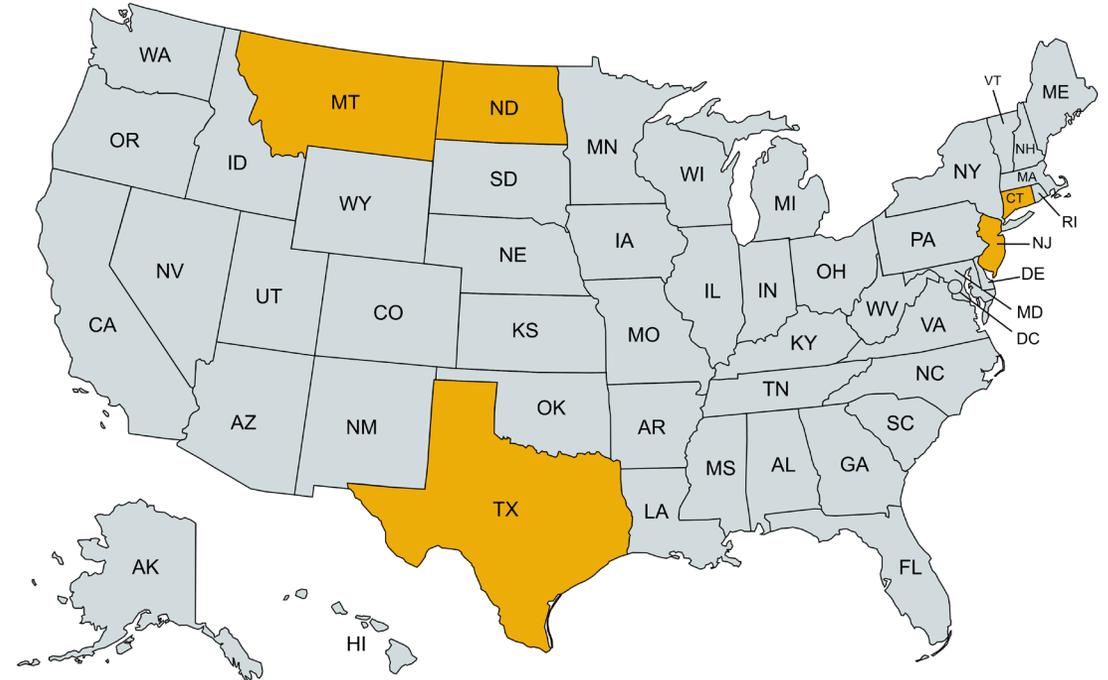
WHAT'S NEXT?

- Inter-State Leave Coordination

- Artificial Intelligence

- Mental Health

- Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work

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Interstate Leave Coordination

Personnel leaders can foster inter-state leave coordination by:

- Engaging in an inter-state paid leave coordination network.

- Developing memoranda of understanding with other states to standardize leave policies.

- Engaging in shared technical assistance and operational templates.

- Reporting on the performance of state leave programs.

- Contributing to a repository of best practices, regulatory updates, and case law.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

State personnel leaders should consider the following when integrating AI systems into benefits and leave management strategies:

- Establishing guidelines for responsible, ethical, and transparent AI use.

- Applying consumer protections for algorithmic bias and discrimination.

- Requiring human oversight of certain employment-related decisions made by AI.

- Disclosing AI use in employment contexts.

- Setting data security requirements.

STAY-AT-WORK/ RETURN-TO-WORK

State personnel leaders can strengthen worker retention and economic resilience by:

- Providing resources on state reasonable accommodation policies.

- Establishing a preferred worker program.

- Developing a centralized accommodation fund.

- Engaging medical providers to support SAW/RTW.

- Delivering SAW/RTW support services through vocational rehabilitation programs and RTW coordinators.

Mental Health

State personnel executives can foster a more resilient, inclusive, and recovery-ready workforce by:

- Educating employers on mental health leave eligibility and parity.

- Providing annual mental health wellness exams.

- Educating employees on their rights to take leave, access benefits, and/or request accommodations for mental health conditions.

- Expanding the definition of injury under workers' compensation to include mental health-related injuries.

- Requiring health plans to provide coverage parity for telehealth and telemedicine.

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DMEC Resources

- [Surveys & Benchmarking](#)

- [AbsenceExemplar® Benchmarking](#)

- [Podcast](#)

- [State and Local Leave Law Map](#)

- [Paid Sick Leave Updates](#)

- [AbsenceNavigator™ Leave Planning](#)

- [Legislative Updates](#)

- [White Papers](#)

- [Sample Templates & Forms](#)

- [@Work Magazine](#)

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2025 Americans with Disabilities Act and Return to Work Issue

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2025 Integrated Disability and Absence Management Issue

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LET'S MAKE AN IMPACT

- Create a free state employee account to access [Legislative Updates](#) and the DMEC State and Local Leave Law Map. To learn more, visit www.dmec.org or contact partners@dmec.org.
- Take the [Plan and Policy Design survey](#) for access to the self-service dashboards to benchmark your plans, and download reports for internal use
- Contact us:

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