



www.few.org



455 Massachusetts Ave. NW, P.O. Box 306
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-898-0994
Fax: 202-898-1535

***This information may be provided to
FEW membership via government email***

FEW Washington Legislative Update January 1-15, 2022

In Congress

Millions of families will stop receiving monthly child tax payments for the first time in months after Congress failed to pass an extension of the expanded credit.

As lawmakers struggle to revive talks to renew the expansion, more than 30 million families that have been receiving the monthly payments since July will not see another round as of Saturday, January 15th.

Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) announced on Thursday, January 13th that the Senate will take up voting rights legislation on Tuesday, January 18th missing his self-imposed deadline to hold a vote on changing the filibuster by Monday, January 17.

The change in the Senate schedule comes after Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) announced he was isolating after testing positive for COVID-19 in a breakthrough case, leaving Democrats one vote short on their ability to start debate on the voting rights bill. Senators are also worried about the potential for another snowstorm in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, January 16th into Monday, January 17th.

Republican Sen. Roger Marshall (Kan.) plans to introduce a bill named after Anthony Fauci after he clashed with the nation's top infectious diseases expert at a Senate hearing.

The FAUCI Act would require the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) website to provide the financial records of administration officials like Fauci and a list of those in the government whose financial records are not public.

Martin Luther King III reacted to Sen. Kyrsten Sinema's (D-Ariz.) announcement on Thursday, January 13th that she will not support a change to the Senate filibuster, writing in a statement that history will remember the Arizona Democrat "unkindly."

"History will remember Senator Sinema unkindly. While Sen. Sinema remains stubborn in her 'optimism,' Black and Brown Americans are losing their right to vote," King III wrote in a statement shortly after Sinema's floor speech regarding the filibuster.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) vowed on Thursday, January 13th that he will not "vote to eliminate or weaken the filibuster," the latest blow to Democratic hopes of changing the Senate rules to pass voting rights legislation.

Manchin issued a statement reaffirming his position shortly after fellow centrist Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), in a floor speech just before President Biden's meeting with the Senate Democratic caucus, said she would also not support changing the filibuster.

A pair of Senate Democrats introduced a bill on Wednesday, January 12th that would ban members of Congress and their families from making stock trades while in office.

The bill, dubbed the Ban Congressional Stock Trading Act, would require that all sitting members of Congress, their spouses and dependent children divest from certain investments or transfer them into a qualified blind trust within 120 days of the legislation being enacted. Incoming members of Congress and their families would have to do the same within 120 days of taking office.

FEW Washington Legislative Update – January 1-15, 2022

Tier I

Violence Against Women Act:

A bipartisan group of lawmakers will press in 2022 for a renewal of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for the first time in nearly a decade following a rise in domestic violence cases during the pandemic.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Ala.), who announced a bipartisan deal on a framework for the VAWA reauthorization earlier this month with Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), said lawmakers hope to introduce the legislation in the next few weeks.

If passed, it would mark the first time in almost nine years that VAWA, a landmark piece of legislation then-Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) championed that was made law in 1994, was reauthorized.

VAWA, which has been reauthorized three times since it took effect, seeks to bolster domestic violence response at multiple levels of government, as well as efforts to combat dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Its last authorization, which was approved by Congress in 2013, expired five years later after lawmakers failed to renew it. At the time, authorizations for appropriations for VAWA programs lapsed, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Lawmakers have continued to approve funding for the programs in annual spending bills. But until VAWA is reauthorized, advocates say the measure, which is usually updated when its authorization is renewed, will fall short of meeting the needs of the victims it is designed to protect.

“Each time we reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act ever since it was first authorized in 1994, we really build on the progress of the years before,” Terri Poore, policy director at the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, said in an interview. She added that leaders learned a great deal about how to address violence in the intervening years of past authorizations.

Poore noted that when the bill was first passed, “there weren’t a lot of provisions to address sexual assault specifically, and the next authorization really tried to look at those issues.”

Among the proposals detailed in the framework announced by the four senators’ days are provisions that aim to strengthen rape prevention and protections for young survivors, as well as expand access to emergency housing support for survivors.

Advocates say the legislation would come at a critical time after data emerged showing an uptick in domestic cases in parts of the U.S. not long after much of the nation went into lockdown during the pandemic last year.

“People have been at home more with fewer resources,” Poore said. “I think domestic violence programs and sexual assault programs have been trying to transition to meet all survivors where they are. But of course, people have been at home more, so some of the pathways for getting out and getting free have been more difficult.”

The framework announcement also outlines a provision that would target what advocates and lawmakers have referred to as the so-called “boyfriend loophole” by prohibiting individuals convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence against a dating partner from possessing or purchasing firearms or ammunition.

Lawmakers said the provision would only apply to protective orders and convictions that are issued after the new VAWA reauthorization is enacted.

Earlier this year, the House voted to pass legislation reauthorizing VAWA that would prevent dating partners from purchasing or owning guns if they were convicted of domestic violence or abuse, instead of just applying the restriction to spouses or formerly married partners.

Additional provisions in the framework include those to expand programs to ensure that VAWA provides access to survivors in rural areas, as well as survivors “requiring culturally specific services,” among others.

A 2016 study funded by the National Institute of Justice found that more than 80 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women experienced violence in their lifetime, over half of which said they have experienced sexual violence or physical violence by an intimate partner.

Sourced from [The Hill](#)

Child Tax Credit:

Millions of families on January 15th will stop receiving monthly child tax payments for the first time in months after Congress failed to pass an extension of the expanded credit.

As lawmakers struggle to revive talks to renew the expansion, more than 30 million families that have been receiving the monthly payments since July will not see another round on Saturday, January 15th.

Democrats temporarily expanded the child tax credit in early 2021 as part of a sweeping coronavirus relief package enacted under President Biden.

Under the expansion, Democrats removed work requirements for the credit, raised the maximum credit amount and allowed those eligible to access half of the credit amount through monthly payments.

Many Democrats and advocates have called for the expanded credit to be made permanent, touting it as a significant contributor to reducing child poverty by allowing those in the lowest-income households to access the full amount, as well as a means to help provide relief to middle-income families.

“You're seeing folks spending it on like bills, food, school supplies, some for savings, and some for paying off debt, and I think this sort of speaks to the real value of this kind of economic relief, especially in the middle of a pandemic,” Ahmad Ali, press secretary for progressive pollster Data for Progress, told The Hill. “It's about making things a little bit easier to raise a family to stay afloat in the middle of all this.”

Democratic leadership aimed to pass the extension as part of a larger social and climate spending plan known as the Build Back Better Act, a cornerstone of Biden's economic agenda.

But those efforts hit a roadblock amid opposition from Sen. Joe Manchin(D-W.Va.), a key holdout who has expressed concerns about the expanded credit in addition to the overall package in its current form. Manchin has cited rising inflation as one of his reasons.

Democrats have expressed hope that the tax credit and larger talks can be revived and expect negotiations to pick up in the weeks ahead. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) also expressed hope earlier this month that the bill would eventually be brought to the floor.

Democrats are using a process known as budget reconciliation to pass the bill, which will allow them to approve the package in the 50-50 Senate with a simple majority. But to pass the plan, Democrats need all of their party's senators to back it.

Rep. John Yarmuth (D-Ky.), chairman of the House Budget Committee, told reporters that he is hopeful the expanded child tax credit is one of the major policies that will be able to remain in the final version of the plan.

While most Republicans are opposed to the design of the expanded child tax credit Biden signed off on last year, some have signaled interest in reaching a bipartisan agreement on a path forward for the tax credit. But they have said the benefit would likely look much different from the Democratic-backed expansion.

Advocates and experts say returning to previous versions of the credit, which included work requirements and a credit that was not fully refundable, would hurt those most vulnerable.

“It's about cutting the deep poverty rate, and those are the folks who, because they don't have any earnings, or have very limited earnings, basically did not benefit much at all from the child tax credit before it became fully refundable,” researcher Stephen Nuñez, who heads guaranteed income policy research for the Jain Family Institute, told The Hill.

Nuñez added that it's “very clear that the fully refundable benefit has a disproportionate impact on African American child poverty and deep poverty and Hispanic poverty and deep poverty.”

Sourced From [The Hill](#)

FEW Washington Legislative Update – January 1-15, 2022 Tier II

Vaccine Mandates:

The US Supreme Court has blocked President Joe Biden's rule requiring workers at large companies to be vaccinated or masked and tested weekly. The justices at the nation's highest court said the mandate exceeded the Biden administration's authority. Separately they ruled that a more limited vaccine mandate could stand for staff at government-funded healthcare facilities.

The administration said the mandates would help fight the pandemic. President Biden, whose approval rating has been sagging, expressed disappointment with the decision "to block common-sense life-saving requirements for employees". He added: "I call on business leaders to immediately join those who have already stepped up - including one third of Fortune 100 companies - and institute vaccination requirements to protect their workers, customers, and communities."

Former President Donald Trump cheered the court's decision, and said vaccine mandates "would have further destroyed the economy." "We are proud of the Supreme Court for not backing down," he said in a statement. "No mandates!"

The administration's workplace vaccine mandate would have required workers to receive a Covid-19 shot, or be masked and tested weekly at their own expense. It would have applied to workplaces with at least 100 employees and affected some 84 million workers. It was designed to be enforced by employers.

Opponents, including several Republican states and some business groups, said the administration was overstepping its power with the requirements, which were introduced in November and immediately drew legal challenges.

In the end, Joe Biden's vaccine mandates stood or fell based on judicial interpretations of federal statute, not principles of individual liberty or appeals to the greater good. According to a majority of the Supreme Court, Mr Biden had the law on his side when ordering healthcare workers to get vaccinated, but using a 51-year-old workplace safety statute to implement a vaccine-or-test requirement on all large employers was a bridge too far.

Once again, the current balance of the Supreme Court comes into sharp relief, with four reliably conservative justices, three reliable liberal ones and two - Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh - at the ideological fulcrum.

This mixed judicial bag is just the latest setback for a presidential Covid-response plan that frequently has seemed a step behind the latest twists in the pandemic. The administration was slow to encourage boosters and caught flat-footed by the Omicron-induced surge in demand for testing.

Now Mr Biden will either have to convince Congress to act on mandates - an unlikely prospect given the brick wall the rest of his agenda keeps hitting in the Senate - or figure out new ways to shepherd the nation out of the pandemic gloom. In a 6-3 decision, the justices agreed with that argument, saying that the workplace safety rule for large employers was too broad to fall under the authority of the Department of Labor's Occupational Health and Safety Administration to regulate workplace safety.

"Covid-19 can and does spread at home, in schools, during sporting events, and everywhere else that people gather," the court's majority wrote. That kind of universal risk is no different from the day-to-day dangers that all face from crime, air pollution, or any number of communicable diseases."

"This is no 'everyday exercise of federal power,'" they added. "It is instead a significant encroachment on the lives - and health - of a vast number of employees."

The more limited rule concerning more than 10 million staff at healthcare facilities that receive government funding did not pose the same concern, they decided, by 5-4. That said, imposing conditions on recipients of public money fit "neatly" into the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The court's three liberal justices opposed blocking the vaccine mandate, saying such a decision "stymies the federal government's ability to counter the unparalleled threat that Covid-19 poses to our nation's workers."

The Biden administration had estimated that instituting a vaccine requirement at big employers would save 6,500 lives and prevent 250,000 hospital admissions over six months.

More than 60% of Americans are fully vaccinated already. Independent of the government's regulations, some companies, including Google, Citibank and IBM, have started to move forward with their own requirements.

But the National Federation of Independent Businesses, a lobby group that was one of the lead plaintiffs challenging the government's workplace vaccine rule, had charged that it would burden small-business owners with new compliance costs, make it harder to fill positions and lead to lost profits and lost sales.

Sourced from [BBC](#)

FEW Washington Legislative Update – January 1-15, 2022 Tier III

Women's Rights in 2021:

Women have been more severely impacted by the economic, psychological and physical consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic compared to their male counterparts. The Biden administration's revolutionary strides to enact paid maternity leave into law has been stifled by political gridlock making the aspiration of finally achieving gender wealth equality in this country a mere far-fetched goal.

Women's reproductive autonomy is in the news as several states, including Texas enact laws that prohibit and criminalize women for obtaining abortions even in cases of rape and incest.

The United States is one of only six countries in the world without national paid maternity leave and the Biden administration's hope of finally achieving paid family leave was stifled when Joe Manchin announced in December his refusal to support the expansion of the Family and Medical Leave act to include four weeks of paid family and medical leave.

The substantial wage gap between men and women in the United States can be attributed to the fact that women are more likely to be single parents or primary caretakers who take on the burden of unpaid family care. This gap forces women to take more time off from work, or choose not to work at all, in order to provide necessary care to children and elders who cannot care for themselves. According to the National Partnership, new mothers who take paid leave are more likely than those who take no

paid leave to stay in the workforce and are 54 percent more likely to report wage increases.

Proving paid family leave will allow caretakers, who are mostly women, to provide necessary care for elders and children without having to worry about significant reductions in pay, termination, or inability to participate in the labor economy all together. Biden came closer than any other presidential administration in enacting paid family leave but his ultimate failure indicates a grim reality for American women who may have to wait decades longer to finally achieve federal paid maternity leave just like almost every other woman on earth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has only further harmed female caretakers as lockdowns and school closures have restricted children to the home and subsequently forced many mothers to leave the workforce or substantially reduce their paid working hours to care for their families.

The OECD's 2020 Risks that Matter survey reports that "mothers were nearly three times as likely as fathers to report that they took on the majority or all of additional unpaid care work related to school or childcare facility closures: 61.5% of mothers of children under age 12 say they took on the majority or entirety of the extra care work, while 22.4% of fathers report that they did." This phenomenon has only deepened gender wealth inequality and left many women even more dependent on male financial support or government assistance for survival. CNBC reports that In 2020 alone "women globally lost more than 64 million jobs" which "cost women around the world at least \$800 billion in earnings."

A rise in domestic and gendered violence is also another disheartening consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic that has negatively impacted the health and safety of women. Financial insecurity, male unemployment, and the psychological effects caused by the pandemic has exacerbated violence against women. According to the National Commission on Covid-19 and Criminal Justice, the number of domestic violence incidents in the US increased by 8.1% after lockdown orders.

The increased isolation women are experiencing due to lockdowns have trapped many women at home with their abusers increasing the occurrences of physical and verbal assault. The increase in substance abuse caused by the stress of the pandemic has also made women more susceptible to gendered violence. Furthermore, the limitations of outside contact and support has made reporting domestic violence substantially more difficult for women.

In May of 2021 Governor Greg Abbott enacted the Texas Heartbeat Act which bans all abortions (excluding when the mother's life is at risk), even in cases of rape and incest,

after a mere six weeks of pregnancy. Similarly, Mississippi enacted a ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy which is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court. The case Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, directly Challenges Roe v. Wade and could set off a catalyst of other state abortion bans if it is upheld by the overwhelming conservative court.

Due to ‘trigger laws ’which automatically impose restrictions or bans on abortions in 21 states upon the overturning of Roe v. Wade, according to NPR “access to legal abortion could end for more than 100 million Americans,” Further more “most would ban abortion outright with limited exceptions — like medical emergencies or in cases of rape and incest” and are currently in place in Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Utah. Alabama, Arizona, Michigan, West Virginia, and Wisconsin also still have abortions bans that were enacted prior to Roe v Wade which could now be enforced if Roe were overturned.

Sourced from [National Partnership](#), [OECD](#), [CNBC](#), [Global Citizen](#), and [NPR](#)

The articles and information posted in this publication are obtained from other qualified published sources and are protected under copyright laws.