

Winston Paves the Way in Big Law with Generous Gender-Neutral Parental Leave Policy

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On May 18, 2016, Winston & Strawn announced a new gender-neutral parental leave program that offers all U.S.-based associates and of counsel, regardless of gender, paid parental leave of up to 20 weeks. The firm also enhanced its leave policies for U.S.-based practice attorneys and staff.

Winston's previous policy was already considered generous compared to other Chicago-based law firms, according to *Crain's Chicago Business*' article "Winston & Strawn Gives New Parents 20 Weeks Off."

The Huffington Post's article "This Big Law Firm Just Stepped into the 21st Century" states that "this is a pretty big deal in the legal industry" and that "Winston & Strawn is the first law firm to have a policy this expansive."

The new policy addresses elements vital to the advancement of women in the legal industry. *Crain's Chicago Business* notes that 82 percent of the equity partners in the 200 largest firms are men and that historically some men in large law firms have been reluctant to take permitted parental leave for fear that it will adversely affect their careers.

According to a study by *The Economist*, "When new fathers take parental leave, mothers tend to return to the labour market, female employment is higher, and the earnings gap between men and women is lower."

Winston's policy offers flexibility for attorneys expanding their families and juggling work-life balance. As part of the new policy, the firm created the "Parental Leave Transition Support Program," which offers parents a Parental Leave Liaison to assist with preparing and returning from parental leave.

"In order to retain our outstanding performers and recruit the next generation of leaders for the firm, we need to offer the most competitive benefits and invest in our people," said Managing Partner Tom Fitzgerald. "We believe these new policies will provide a meaningful level of support and enable our attorneys and staff who are parents to continue to advance in their careers."

Learn more about the new policy [here](#).

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