

## Maternity Leave Length Increased in India

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Thursday, August 18, 2016

The Upper House of India's Parliament just passed an amendment to India's Maternity Benefit Act of 1961. The amendment increases maternity leave to 26 weeks of paid leave, a major increase over the current 12 week leave. It also grants a number of new rights, albeit with important qualifications. These include:

- Leave may start up to six weeks before the expected delivery date.
- The increase to 26 weeks does not apply to mothers with 2 or more children. For them, the leave continues to be 12 weeks.
- The introduction of 12 weeks of paid leave for mothers adopting a child younger than 3 months old, and for women having a child through a surrogate.
- Allowing new mothers and their employer to agree to a period of time for the new mother to work from home after the 26 week leave ends.
- A requirement for employers to inform women of their right to maternity leave at the time of hire.

The changes still need to be approved by the Lower House of India's Parliament. The amendments, however, have already been approved by the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and the government has a majority of the seats in the lower house. Therefore, it is likely the amendments will be approved shortly. These expanded maternity leave provisions, providing 26 weeks of paid leave, go far past the protections in some other countries, most notably the United States, which provides for a maximum of 12 weeks of unpaid leave under federal law.

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