

Lawmakers From Both Sides Of The Aisle Unveil Bills To Help Working Women, Families

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A bipartisan group of Utah lawmakers unveiled a suite of bills Thursday aimed at helping working families.

The package includes over a dozen pieces of legislation that range from providing birth control to low-income women, to raising the minimum wage, to giving state employees paid parental leave. Some of the bills may face resistance in the Republican-dominated Utah Legislature, which has blocked attempts to expand

Medicaid. But lawmakers are hopeful that at least some of them will pass and provide support for working Utahns.

Several groups, including the Salt Lake Chamber, ACLU of Utah and Voices for Utah Children turned out to support the bills. Tech executive Vance Checketts said while business groups don't necessarily support every proposal, they applauded the overall goal.

"Employers like ours invest time and resources to hire and train workers," Checketts said.

"Ultimately, our bottom line depends on the success of our employees and their families."

Here's a look at some of the bills proposed:

FOOD TAX REPEAL

Rep. Tim Quinn, R-Heber City, describes himself as a fiscal conservative, but he's running a [bill](#) that would eliminate Utah's grocery tax, while raising the tax on non-food items from 4.7% to 4.94%.

"I don't view this from a standpoint of economics," Quinn said. "I think this is a moral issue."

Quinn said the food tax disproportionately affects poor people, who spend more of their total income on groceries.

MEDICAID WAIVER FOR CONTRACEPTION



A bill championed by Rep. Ray Ward, R-Bountiful, could expand Medicaid to cover birth control for low-income women. Ward, a family physician, argues the bill would help pull women and families out of poverty by reducing unplanned pregnancies.

INCENTIVES FOR CHILDCARE & PAID LEAVE

Rep. Becky Edwards, R-North Salt Lake, plans to run several bills that she said would help working families. One of them would incentivize businesses to create savings accounts, where both the employer and employee would contribute toward childcare costs.

The other would provide tax credits to businesses that offer paid family and medical leave to employees.

Rep. Elizabeth Weight, D-West Valley City, is sponsoring [a bill](#) that would require state agencies and universities to provide six weeks of paid parental leave after a birth or adoption of a new child.