

Wanting work-life balance doesn't make Paul Ryan a hypocrite

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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So Paul Ryan [doesn't want to be Speaker of the House](#), but he says [he'd take the job if granted certain conditions](#). One of these conditions: that some of the job's duties be reduced so he's not away from his family so much. Maybe he's being [strategic](#) here; maybe he's being [totally unrealistic](#). But at a minimum, it's an admirable thing for him to want to prioritize parenting, right?

Well, [Sheryl Sandberg thinks so](#). But why, clever liberals want to know, does Sandberg not care about the Republican legislator's [hypocrisy](#), about [the irony of what he's asking for](#), about the fact that he's an [enemy of women](#)? As history's greatest monster, Paul Ryan is naturally opposed to lots of good things—including federal standards for paid family leave. So he'll get no kudos for wanting to spend time with his kids, because he is wrong and he is bad.

I'm aware that this story plays into [intra-feminist debates about capitalism and class solidarity and child care](#), that Sandberg represents a pretty narrow, establishment vision of justice for women. And I get that liberals have complicated feelings about the question of Speaker Boehner's successor, pointing as it does both to [House Republicans' disarray](#) and to the fact that they've got the majority so locked down that they can afford to act like this.

Still, I think people are being, [to quote Lincoln Chafee](#), a bit rough. Ryan, after all, isn't against other people having time off work; he's against that decision being made by the government instead of by employers. I think he's very wrong about this—[requiring paid time off is great policy for workers and employers alike](#). (I think he's [wrong about](#) a lot of [other stuff](#), too.) But it seems pretty cheap to equate his views on the role of government with the notion that he's entitled to something other workers should not have.

It's certainly fair to say Rep. Ryan values political ideology over sensible policy, or that he puts an undue amount of faith in the market's ability to take care of workers. It's a stretch to call him a hypocrite just because he's a small-government Republican who's negotiating for more time with his kids.