

Louisianans Need Paid Sick Days

JULY 2015

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, an estimated 676,281 private sector workers in Louisiana, or 45.1 percent of the workforce, cannot earn a single paid sick day to use to recover from common illnesses or seek medical care.¹ Nationwide, more than 43 million private sector workers – nearly 40 percent of the workforce² – cannot earn paid sick time.

When workers do not have access to paid sick days, the consequences can be significant. For a typical family in the United States without paid sick days, for example, 3.5 days lost to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly grocery budget.³

Louisiana families need paid sick days to protect their financial stability, help maintain a strong state economy and promote their own good health and that of their communities.

By the Numbers

- ▶ **Nearly 730,000 children in Louisiana live in families in which all parents work**,⁴ yet too often parents cannot use the sick days they earn to care for their children.⁵ Nationally, parents without paid sick days are more than twice as likely to send a sick child to school or day care⁶, which can put the health of their child, their child's classmates and their teachers at risk.
- ▶ **Louisiana is home to nearly 1,100,000 African American workers**⁷, who have disproportionately low access to paid sick days.⁸
- ▶ **More than 160,000 people in Louisiana work in restaurants**,⁹ an industry that requires frequent contact with the public but in which, nationally, 90 percent of workers cannot earn paid sick days.¹⁰ The health risks can be significant. Overall, workers without paid sick days are more likely to report going to work with a contagious illness and risk infecting others.¹¹

"I have had cancer. I worked through chemotherapy because I saw other people around me lose their jobs after taking time off for childbirth and not recovering from surgery fast enough. These people were replaced by others who also needed work. Losing work during a serious illness places me at risk for losing my medical insurance and/or the money to pay for the medical insurance that covers treatment of my cancer. Losing work when jobs are scarce for something out of my control (I eat well, I do not smoke, I exercise, I do not drink) also threatens my very well-being and my ability to keep a roof over my head. It also takes the joy out of the workplace and makes the environment petty, needlessly stressful and competitive."

— Leslie, Louisiana



- ▶ **The largest industry in Louisiana is health care and social assistance.**¹² Nationally, more than one-quarter of workers in this industry cannot earn paid sick time.¹³
- ▶ **In Louisiana, 34.3 percent of jobs are considered low-wage jobs.**¹⁴ Low-wage workers are even less likely to have access to paid sick days.

Paid Sick Days Benefit Families, Business and Our Economy

- ▶ **Paid sick days keep families healthy.** When workers have paid sick days, they are able to get regular physicals and take their children to well-child visits and for immunizations, which may prevent serious illnesses.¹⁵ Children with serious illnesses do better when their parents are able to stay with them.¹⁶
- ▶ **Paid sick days are good for business.** Employee turnover is expensive – on average, one-fifth of an employee’s annual salary.¹⁷ Paid sick days result in reduced turnover,¹⁸ which leads to reduced hiring and training costs for businesses.
- ▶ **Paid sick days decrease unnecessary health care costs.** Universal access to paid sick days would eliminate an estimated 1.3 million emergency room visits each year, saving \$1.1 billion annually in costs to individuals, private insurers and public programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁹

Standards for Louisiana and the Nation Should Be Priorities

STATE PROGRESS

- ▶ **Currently, workers in Louisiana are not guaranteed the right to earn paid sick days by state or municipal law.** However, future efforts could lead Louisiana to join the growing list of states and localities with paid sick days laws. A list of current state and local paid sick days laws is available at NationalPartnership.org/PSDLaws. And a growing body of evidence shows that these laws are working well.²⁰

FEDERAL SUPPORT AND LEGISLATION

- ▶ **At the national level, there is strong public support for universal access to paid sick days:** 85 percent of voters want employers to provide paid sick time.²¹
- ▶ The federal **Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932/S. 497)** would establish a national paid sick days standard, allowing workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, attend school meetings related to a child’s health condition or disability or seek assistance related to domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault. Workers in businesses with fewer than 15 employees would earn up to seven job-protected *unpaid* sick days each year to be used for the same reasons, unless their employers choose to offer paid sick days.

People across the United States should have a fair shot at getting the care they need, caring for a child or assisting a loved one – no matter where they live or work. For more, visit www.PaidSickDays.org.

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