

## [Family Values @ Work](#)

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*As calls for earned sick days grow nationwide,*

# PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL PASSES SICK DAYS, PORTLAND BECOMES FOURTH CITY WITH SICK DAYS LAW

***Philadelphia City Council Vote Expected Thursday, Hearing in NYC Approaches, Legislatures in Washington State, Vermont, Massachusetts Move Bills Forward***

PORTLAND, OR—Adding to the growing number of cities and states that ensure working people are able to take time off when they are sick, City Council members of Portland, Oregon voted in a unanimous decision to pass the Earned Sick Time policy on Wednesday. Portland becomes the fourth city in the country to adopt such a law. The bill will enable more than 120,000 workers in Portland to earn up to five sick days a year and help boost the economy by making sure workers can hang on to critical income when they are ill.

"I worked at a local sandwich shop for three years without any benefits. One day I got sick—really sick. I knew that when an employee throws up at work, they have to go home—it's the health code law," said Ian Rizzo, a food service worker from Portland. "I called my boss, called the other store, left messages, and sat outside in my car, nauseated, trying to make sure the store was covered. The next day, I came in to have my boss fired me on the spot." Rizzo is part of a strong coalition of local businesses, workers, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups for seniors, women, children and people with disabilities, public health experts, community groups and healthcare professionals who support the bill.

With support across party lines—polls consistently show [high levels of approval](#) for sick days among Democrats, Independents and Republicans, and across demographics—and with local and national leaders, including President Obama committing to "redouble our efforts on behalf of fairer workplaces and healthier, more secure families," support for paid sick days legislation is growing across the country. On Thursday, Philadelphia's City Council will vote on a similar bill that will expand on the city's existing law to [extend protection to nearly 200,000 Philadelphians](#). In New York City, prominent women leaders including [Gloria Steinem](#) and many others are calling for Council Speaker Christine Quinn to bring the bill to a vote after a March 22 hearing.

The House Appropriations Committee in [Washington State](#) just passed [a bill](#) establishing protections for paid sick and safe leave, bringing the state a step closer to implementing a statewide sick time standard. In [Maryland](#), the state assembly recently held hearings on paid sick days. Although the bill will not advance this year, it is supported by [82 percent of Maryland voters](#) and will be reintroduced next session. [Vermont's](#) State House also introduced a sick time bill with 35 sponsors from all three parties, and voters in [Massachusetts](#) are mobilizing around the earned sick days bill introduced in the legislature in January, with events planned around the state this month. Residents of [Orange County, Florida](#) will be able to vote for paid sick days in August 2014 thanks to the 50,000 voters who petitioned for the ballot initiative. At the federal level, the [Healthy Families Act](#), which would set a national sick days standard, will be introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Sen. Tom Harkin in mid-March.

"Policies like paid sick days are about more than keeping people healthy - they're about keeping money in the pockets of working families so they can cover the basics," said Ellen Bravo, executive director of [Family Values @ Work](#), the national network of 20 city and state coalitions, including the Everybody Benefits Coalition in Portland. "It holds our economy back when people lose their jobs and can't cover the grocery bill because

they caught the flu. Local groups are gaining momentum and will continue to advance family-friendly policies across the country, paving the way for national standards.”

The victory in Portland follows recent wins in [Connecticut](#), which passed the first statewide law in 2011, [Seattle](#) in 2011, Washington DC in 2008, San Francisco in 2006, and a victorious ballot initiative in [Long Beach, California](#) that granted sick days to hotel workers in November 2012.

As momentum behind sick days grows, an opposition funded by corporate giants including the \$600 billion restaurant industry, [the Karl Rove-backed National Federation of Independent Business](#) and the industry-backed PR firm [Employment Policies Institute](#), is also mounting. In fact, a coordinated effort is being waged seeking to limit the ability of cities and states to pass these measures. Some state legislators – many of whom are members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)—are trying to eliminate the right of voters and lawmakers in cities and counties by introducing legislation that would pre-empt local decision-making around earned sick time and other employee benefits. Currently, legislation of this type is being considered in [Florida](#), [Washington](#), Mississippi and [Michigan](#).

"I have worked my whole life without reliable access to paid sick days," said Amendu Evans, who for over 37 years has cleaned Philadelphia buildings, including a stint in Comcast's Center City tower. "My family and thousands of others need paid sick days so we don't spread illness and so we can take care of ourselves and sick family members. The voices of Philadelphia's working families should not be drowned out by corporate lobbyists."

Numerous studies show the positive impact that earned sick days has on businesses and the economy, and [economists](#) say job retention policies like earned sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen economic recovery. Nationwide, 40 million working Americans do not have access to paid sick time. Nearly [one in four](#) workers report that they have lost a job or were threatened with losing a job because they took time off when they were sick or to care for a sick family member. For families living paycheck-to-paycheck, losing just a few days' wages can be devastating. For a typical family without paid sick days, just [3.5 days with no pay is equivalent to losing an entire month's groceries](#).

Practical experiences with the law show a positive impact. San Francisco, which has had an earned sick days law for six years, was rated by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2012 as [one of the top cities in the world to do business](#), and more than [two in three San Francisco businesses](#) now support the local law, with six in seven reporting no negative impact on profitability. In Connecticut, which passed the first statewide paid sick days law in 2011, the Department of Labor reports that employment has grown since the law's passage, particularly in the [Leisure and Hospitality](#) and [Education and Health Services](#) sectors, the two most impacted by the new law.

The Center for Disease Control estimates the average annual cost to employers of the flu at [\\$10.4 billion](#), with the cost of this year's epidemic expected to be much higher, one of the many reasons that [business owners are increasingly supporting earned sick time](#) legislation. Beyond the economic benefits, paid sick day policies offer immediate public health benefits. The CDC also estimates that [7 million Americans](#) were infected by co-workers who went to work sick during the 2009 H1N1 outbreak.

"For too many Portland families, taking a child to the doctor or staying home with the flu has meant losing needed pay – or even a job," said Andrea Paluso, Executive Director of Family Forward Oregon. "Portlanders no longer need to risk their financial security to do what's right for their own health and the wellbeing of our workplaces, schools, and communities. This is a win-win for Portland's families, businesses and economy."

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[Family Values @ Work](#) is the network of 20 state coalitions working for paid sick days, family leave insurance and other policies that value families at work.