



Paid Sick Days: Letter to the Editor Talking Points

What are guaranteed paid sick days?

- A certain number of days an employee may call in sick to work in order to care for their health or a family member while still get paid.
- A tool that allows employees to maximize their productivity while at work and protect the public from contagions by ensuring they will never have to choose between breaking their budget to get well and going to work sick because they can't afford a day off.
- Seven paid sick days per year are proposed for Vermont employees who work more than 30 hours per week, and are proposed to be pro-rated for part-time workers.
- Paid sick days are mandatory in all industrialized nations except the U.S.; there are no U.S. state laws (except in the District of Columbia) that require employers to provide paid sick leave benefits for their employees, or even sick leave without pay.

Why are they important for Vermont families?

- Over 106,000 Vermonters have no paid sick days.
- This means those workers are likely to find themselves in a situation where they need to choose between caring for their family's health and paying their bills.
- When employees come to work sick or send their children to school sick because they cannot afford to stay home, they risk the health of the public around them.
- Working mothers (who tend to be the dominant caregivers), single parents, and low-wage workers are disproportionately affected by a lack of guaranteed paid sick days. The lack of guaranteed paid sick days thereby perpetuates economic disparity and inequality.
- In the current economic crisis workers need every dollar of every paycheck, making a missed day's pay into a possible tipping point.
- Taking paid sick leave can reduce health care costs for workers, employers and the state.
 - If they receive care when medical problems are small they prevent themselves from getting sicker, where treatment becomes expensive

Why are they important for Vermont businesses?

- Paid sick days are a savings for businesses; when employees show up to work sick ("presenteeism") they function inefficiently for a prolonged period of time, resulting in more lost productivity than if they had stayed home to recuperate more quickly. Guaranteed paid sick days could result in an annual savings of up to \$127 per employee.
- Sick employees risk infecting other employees, as well as customers.
- Paid sick days result in decreased turnover; they are part of comprehensive livable jobs, which not only attract, but also retain employees.

What we can do:

- Support Paid Sick Day Coalition members, including: Voices for Vermont's Children; The Vermont Worker's Center; Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility; United Professions on Vermont/AFT; Vermont Commission on Women; and Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.
- Write your own letter to the editor.
- Know your employer's policy on sick leave.
- Email the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign if you have a story about struggling without paid sick leave; livablewage@picvt.org
- Sign or circulate the Paid Sick Days for Vermonters petition at www.ipetitions.com/petition/paidsickdaysvermont/
- Go to vtlivablewage.org for more information.



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Writing a letter the editor will want to publish; General Tips:

- Make it relevant; citing articles specifically published by the periodical you're writing to makes it a recent, active topic for them and may also help align that publication as your ally. For example, an article about the challenges posed to families and individuals by today's economic crisis, or a flu outbreak, is relevant to how paid sick days could help alleviate that.
- Be concise by focusing on one or two major points. A general word count that is space and time friendly, but long enough to have substance, is around 250 words.
- Include your name and contact information.
- Try to reference a published report, article, study, or comparable working policy.

Some suggestions;

San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance

http://www.sfgov.org/site/olse_index.asp?id=49389

"The Livable Jobs Toolkit"

<http://www.vtlivablewage.org/jobgap.html> (p. 9 & 21)

"Paid Sick Days Legislation," A Legislator's Guide:

http://www.clasp.org/publications/paid_sick_days.pdf

"Employer Rules Make Many Work Sick"

http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/newssun/news/1369287,5_1_WA09_SICKLEAVE_S1.article