



sicktimechicago.org

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Ballot Referendum Shows that 82% of Chicagoans Support Earned Sick Time

In response to a non-binding referendum on the city ballot, the vast majority of voters said they believe the City of Chicago should require employers to offer paid sick days.

(Chicago) – While voting in citywide elections on February 24th, 82% of Chicagoans voted yes when asked if employers in the City of Chicago should be required to provide employees with paid sick time.

“We’re thrilled to see more data backing up what we already knew—that Chicagoans believe families can’t afford to wait any longer for paid sick days,” said **Melissa Josephs**, leader of the [Earned Sick Time Chicago Coalition](#) and Director of Equal Opportunity Policy at [Women Employed](#). “Lawmakers should swiftly heed this call to give workers much needed relief and make our city a healthier, more business-friendly place.”

Voters who said “yes” believe that Chicago needs legislation that would allow employees to take paid time off in the event of a personal or family illness, an incident of domestic or sexual violence, or a school or building closure due to a public health emergency.

While all wards reported high voter support for the proposal, wards that are predominantly African American yielded the highest support, at an average rate of 90.9%. That level of support should interest both mayoral candidates, Rahm Emanuel and Chuy Garcia, since both are actively pursuing the African American vote.

An ordinance introduced last year would require employers to offer their employees earned sick time that could be used in all of those circumstances. The proposed bill, which has the backing of [a majority of the city’s aldermen](#), would allow workers to earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked, between 5 and 9 days a year depending on employer size.

Currently, [42 percent of private sector](#) workers in Chicago do not have access to a single paid sick day, meaning that more than 460,000 Chicago workers can be fired for missing work if they or relatives are sick. For low-income workers, for whom the absence of the policy is most costly, almost 80 percent lack paid sick days; African-American and Hispanic workers also disproportionately lack access to sick days. Nationally, [nearly one quarter](#) of adults report having been fired or threatened with job loss for taking time off to recover from illness or care for a sick loved one.

“For us, paid sick days is about keeping our income and also keeping our job,” said **Rhiannon Broschat**, a Chicago mother who was fired last year for missing work to care for her son with special needs during an extreme weather emergency. “There are companies that provide sick days because they value employees, making the workplace happier and customers, too. Guaranteeing paid sick days for all of us would be a win for business, the economy and all of us.”

(more)



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Chicago voters are not alone in supporting paid sick days. Nationwide, the [great majority of voters](#)—across all demographics and parties—support policies that allow workers to earn paid sick time. [Philadelphia became the 17th city](#) to pass paid sick days last week, just one week after Tacoma, Washington. And according to a [report](#) from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, paid sick days would save Chicago businesses an estimated \$6 million annually due to reduced turnover, higher productivity and lower absenteeism, and reducing the spread of the flu. Likewise, it [would reduce public healthcare costs](#) by \$12 million annually, including \$3 million in savings to public health insurance systems funded by taxpayers.

“When one of our employees is sick, we want them to stay home to get better,” said **Sarah Marshall** of North Side Community Federal Credit Union. “Since they are offered paid sick time, our employees stick with us for years and that helps our business run smoothly and boosts the bottom line, as training new employees takes time and is expensive.”

For more information on the push for paid sick days in Chicago, visit the [Earned Sick Time Chicago website](#).

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The Earned Sick Time Chicago Coalition includes: Action Now, Arise Chicago, Between Friends, Chicago Foundation for Women, EverThrive Illinois, Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, Jobs with Justice, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, National Employment Lawyers Association – IL, Planned Parenthood of Illinois, Rape Victim Advocates, Restaurant Opportunities Center – Chicago, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, OUR Walmart, Women Employed, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago AFSCME Council 31, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 308, Chicago Teachers Union, Illinois Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 21, Illinois Education Association Region 67, Illinois Federation of Teachers, National Nurses United, SEIU Healthcare IL and Indiana, SEIU Local 73, Teamsters 743, Teamsters 777, United Auto Workers Region 4, United Auto Workers Local 2320, United Steel Workers District 7, UFCW Local 881, UFCW Local 1546, Unite-Here Local 1, Workers Organizing Committee of Chicago/Fight for Fifteen, Workers United.