



The HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT

TOOLKIT FOR DELEGATIONS TO YOUR CONGRESSPERSON OR SENATOR

2008

Table of Contents

How to Organize an Interfaith Delegation to Your Member of Congress _____	2
Talking Points on Paid Sick Days and the Healthy Families Act _____	5
Paid Sick Days: Half of American Workers Can't Take a Sick Day! _____	6
Graphs: Who Has Paid Sick Days _____	8
National Faith Endorsers of the Healthy Families Act _____	9
Letter to Members of Congress from 135+ National Organizations _____	10
Congressional Delegation Record and Evaluation _____	13

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How to Organize an Interfaith Delegation to Your Member of Congress

Focus: The Healthy Families Act: Healing Injustice at the Workplace

Everybody gets sick. But not everyone has time to get better.

Many of us are blessed to have employers that allow us to take time off from work when illness strikes us or our families. But millions of workers do not have a single paid sick day. Those who do have PSD often may not use them to care for a sick child or elderly parent. This means that tens of millions of workers are faced with a stark choice: work while ill or leave your sick child home alone, or lose a day's pay (or your job).

To remedy this injustice, the **Healthy Families Act**, a federal bill, would provide a minimum number of paid sick days to most US workers. These days may be used to tend to oneself, a dependent, or to seek preventive medical care. [See attached policy statement for more detail.]

Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) invites you to organize an interfaith delegation in support of the Healthy Families Act (HFA). Follow these easy steps to organize a delegation:

Find Participants

Talk to faith leaders in your community about the importance of paid sick days and the promise of the Healthy Families Act. Request their participation in a delegation to ask support of the HFA from your congressperson or senator.

Arrange the Meeting

Ask for a meeting with the congressperson in his or her local office, in order to bring a strong delegation of local faith leaders. There are times that Congress is out of session, sometimes for lengthy periods, when your representative will be in district and should be available to meet with a delegation. Write a letter asking for a meeting to discuss immigration issues with a delegation of faith leaders. One or more prominent religious leader should sign the letter. Call the scheduler of the congressperson one week after sending the letter, if you don't receive a reply. Be persistent.

Hold a Pre-meeting

Arrange a time to meet for an hour and a half or so before the scheduled appointment with your congressional representative. Consider meeting at a restaurant, place of worship, or community center near your congress member's office. At the pre-meeting, clarify the purpose of the delegation's visit, select a facilitator, review the proposed agenda, decide on roles (who will say what), and remind people that unity is important, so issues without consensus should not be raised at the meeting.

Evaluate the Meeting

See the evaluation form at the end of this toolkit.

A typical meeting might look like this

Opening

Designate a delegate to open the meeting with prayer. (Be sensitive to interfaith representatives in the room.) Have the facilitator thank the member of Congress (or legislative aide) for his or her time and outline how the group would like the meeting to proceed.

Introductions

Each person should introduce himself or herself. This is not a time to be humble! Give all relevant titles, community connections, and reasons why you could influence other constituents.

Issue Background

Have designated individuals make the case on paid sick days, including the various benefits, such as workers, public health, business, and family.

Support for Our Issues

The rest of the delegates should describe their concerns with the lack of guaranteed paid sick days and their religious traditions' teachings for the respect of human dignity and the importance of family.

Questions to Member of Congress

The meeting facilitator should ask the political leader where she stands on the Healthy Families Act. Is she aware of the bill? Does she support it? If so, will she take a larger role in ensuring its success? If she does not support the bill, why not?

Member of Congress Response

Open the conversation to allow the congressperson or senator to discuss what he thinks can happen at this time and what role he intends to play. Sometimes the elected leader has questions. Answer them if you can. If not, promise to get back to him with answers. Often the official says he wants to study the issue and campaign. Ask when you can follow up to find out what his decision is. Sometimes the leader agrees. Thank him and ask what other ideas he has for reaching other legislators.

Closing

Thank the elected leader for the meeting. Confirm the next steps (such as that you will get back with information to answer a particular question). Close with prayer.



Talking Points on Paid Sick Days and the Healthy Families Act

Half of US workers can't take a sick day

- 48% of private sector workers don't have a single paid sick day. This is 59 million workers.
- 100 million workers can't take a paid sick day to take care of a sick child or elderly parent.
- Our faiths teach us of the inherent dignity of all human beings, as well as the importance of families. Health and healing are other very important tenets of our faiths.

Those most in need are least able to take a paid sick day

- Less than one-quarter of low-wage workers can take a paid sick day; only 11% have paid sick days to use to take care of sick children.
- Working parents are especially affected. 41 % of working parents below 200 % of the federal poverty line have *no paid leave* of any kind.
- 1 in 8 people surveyed in a poll said they or an adult family member had been penalized, disciplined, or fired for taking a sick day.

Paid sick days are good for public health

- People who go to work sick risk spreading their illness to coworkers and customers.
- Over three-quarters of food and public accommodation workers do not have paid sick days. These workers are among the lowest paid in the US, so they can least afford to take a day off without pay.

Paid sick days are good for business

- Sick days are critical to maintaining a productive, healthy workforce.
- Paid sick days mean reduced turnover, reduced spread of contagion, and higher productivity, as well as higher morale.
- “Presenteeism”—when workers go to work sick—costs \$181 billion annually, according to the American Productivity Audit.

The Healthy Families Act – a policy correction to the problem of lack of paid sick days

- The HFA is federal legislation that would provide a minimum of 7 paid sick days per year for full-time workers (pro-rated for part-time workers).
- It would apply to workplaces with 15 or more employees, exempting the smallest businesses like mom-and-pop shops.
- The HFA would set a national standard, a floor much like the minimum wage, for paid sick days. No one should be below the floor.
- Without a national standard, we will have the status quo, a voluntary system in which half of workers don't have paid sick days and those who do are guaranteed that their employer will continue to offer them.



Paid Sick Days: Half of American Workers Can't Take a Sick Day!

IWJ Policy Statement on Paid Sick Days

Updated March 2008

Everybody gets sick. But not everyone has time to get better. Nearly one half of American workers in the private sector (fifty-seven million workers) cannot take a sick day without losing a day's pay, or even possibly their job. Nearly 100 million hard-working Americans cannot take time off to care for a sick child or elderly parent. This is an indignity and injustice that Interfaith Worker Justice is working to overcome.

Those Most in Need Are Least Able to Take a Paid Sick Day

Within the tens of millions of workers without paid sick days, two groups are particularly affected. Less than one quarter of low-wage workers have paid sick days (PSD), although they are the workers who can least afford to lose a day's pay. Only 11 percent may take paid sick days to care for a sick child.

Working mothers bear a heavy burden, as they lose pay, promotions, and general financial security when they are penalized for taking time off to care for sick children. In fact, according to the Urban Institute, 41 percent of working parents below 200 percent of the federal poverty line have no paid leave of any kind. Workers who must provide elder care for sick and aging parents are also affected.

Paid Sick Days are Good for Business and Public Health

Sick days are critical to maintaining a productive, healthy workforce. Businesses that offer paid sick days see reduced turnover, higher productivity, and reduced spread of illness among workers. In fact, the American Productivity Audit found that "presenteeism"—the practice of employees coming to work despite illness—costs \$180 billion annually in lost productivity.

Moreover, guaranteeing paid sick days to workers will benefit public health, as workers with jobs involving contact with the public or its food supply will be able to recuperate at home, rather than bringing illness into the workplace. Over three-quarters of food and public accommodation workers don't have a single paid sick day.

Lack of Policy

Despite the obvious need for paid sick days as a matter of a worker's right, of family values, and of public health for the American workforce, there are no state or federal laws that require workplaces to provide paid sick days so that workers may care for themselves or their family members when they are ill. Without state or federal protections, there is no guarantee that those businesses that currently offer paid sick days will continue to do so.

Therefore, Interfaith Worker Justice supports passage of the **Healthy Families Act** (H.R. 1542, S. 910), which would create a new standard for workers, much like the minimum wage. It would grant seven paid sick days to workers to care for themselves or a family member, as well as to receive preventive care. It would apply to firms with 15 or more employees.

On the state level, bills will be introduced in 2008 in several states, including Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. (San Francisco passed a paid sick days ordinance in 2006 and the District of Columbia city council in March 2008; the D.C. bill must still be signed by the mayor).

The Faith Community and Paid Sick Days

The injustice and indignity of having to choose between working while ill and losing a day's pay (or one's job) is an issue in which many in the faith community have taken a keen interest. Respecting the health and dignity of all human beings is a core value for all faith traditions. This includes not just access to health care, but time away from work to recuperate from illness, as well as to tend to ill family members. Some 20 national faith groups have already endorsed the Healthy Families Act, including Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish faith bodies, faith-based organizations, and women's faith groups.

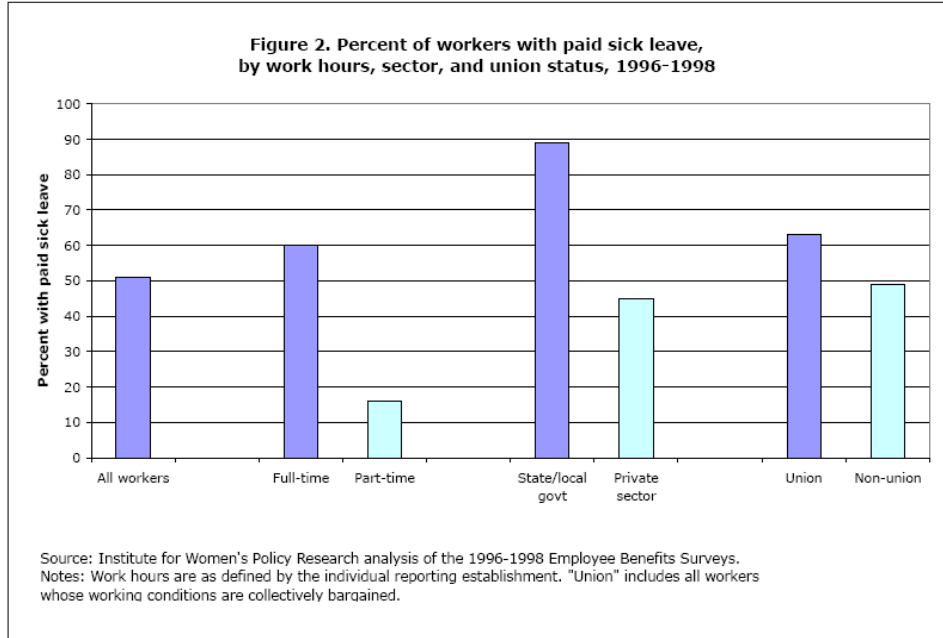
Resources

To see if your congressperson is already a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:HR01542:@@P>

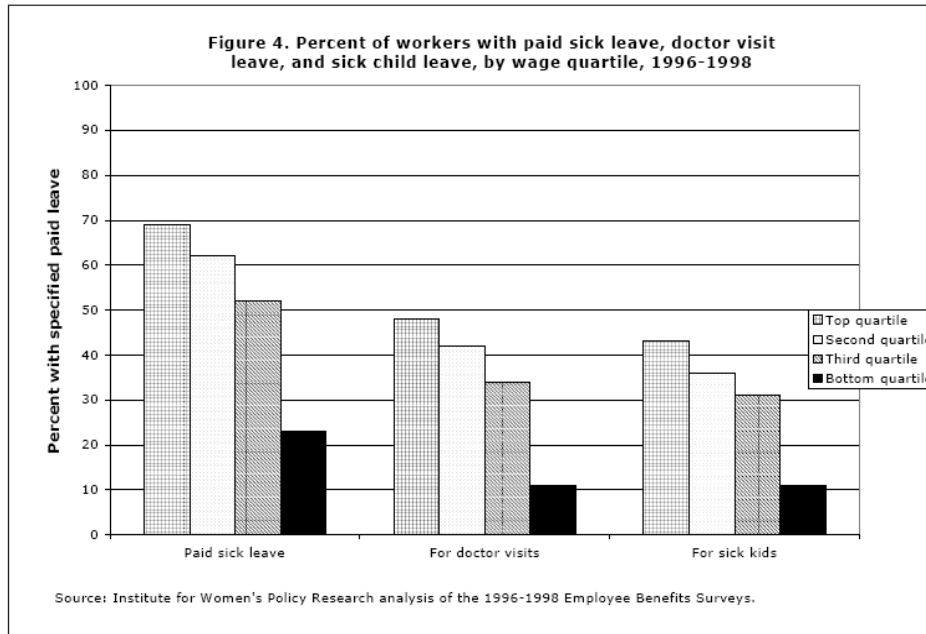
To see if your senator is already a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:SN00910:@@P>

Graphs: Who Has Paid Sick Days

Source: *No Time to Be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't Have Paid Sick Leave* by Vicki Lovell, Institute for Women's Policy Research



The following graph demonstrates the strong connection between a worker's earnings and her ability to take a paid sick day. The 3 sets of bars divide workers into 4 categories (quartiles) based on their earnings. It shows how the 25% of workers earning the least amount of money (the dark black bars on the far right of the sets) have remarkably fewer paid sick days compared to the top 25% of earners (left-hand bars in the sets).



National Faith Endorsers of the Healthy Families Act

As of April 1, 2008

American Friends Service Committee
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Labor Network
Church Women United
Community of Christ
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Interfaith Worker Justice
The Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Justice for Women Working Group of the National Council of Churches
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Baptist Convention
National Council of Jewish Women
Network: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (USA)
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries
Unitarian Universalist Association
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Letter to Members of Congress from 135+ National Organizations

March 26, 2008

Dear Member of Congress,

We are writing to urge your support of the Healthy Families Act, a groundbreaking piece of legislation that guarantees full-time workers seven paid sick days a year, and part-time workers a pro-rata amount of paid sick days, to recover from their own illness or care for a sick family member. Congress should waste no time in passing this bill, which is tremendously important to people all across our country.

Chances are each of us will get sick or need to care for a sick family member this year. But not all of us have the option to take time off from work to get better or to care for a sick family member. **In the U.S. today, nearly half (48 percent) of private sector workers do not have a single paid sick day to use for themselves or to care for a family member.** And 94 million hard-working people do not have a single paid sick day they can use to care for a sick child.

Workers want to be responsible on the job *and* be able to care for their families. In 78 percent of today's families, both parents work for pay – and the typical couple in America now works close to 90 hours per week. But our policies lag desperately behind this reality – and families are struggling as a result. We can and must do better – and we will, if we truly value families.

Providing paid sick days benefits all workers including women and seniors. Nearly half (49 percent) of working mothers miss work when a child comes down with a common illness, and women are more likely to have low-wage jobs that do not offer paid sick days. Parents who lack paid sick days are often forced to choose between the jobs they need and caring for their families.

While this issue is important for families with children, it also affects the more than one-third of working people with elder care responsibilities who need to take time away from work to provide care. Thirty-five percent of workers, both women and men, report that they have cared for an older relative in the past year, and the responsibilities for care-giving will increase as Baby Boomers age.

Three in four low-wage workers (79 percent) do not have a single paid sick day. When low-wage workers get sick, or need to take care of a sick child or take an elderly parent to a medical appointment, they are faced with an impossible choice: lose a day of pay and possibly even their job, or take the time they need to take care of their families. Half of low-wage working parents report losing pay to stay home and care for a sick child or being forced to leave children home alone.

Finally, paid sick days are a key component of safeguarding our nation's public health. Workers who disproportionately lack paid sick days work with the public every day. Seventy-eight percent of food-service and hotel workers do not have a single paid sick day. Many of these

workers are employed in child care centers, retail establishments, and nursing homes. When they go to work sick, their colleagues and all others they contact face an increased risk of contracting illness.

Workers' access to paid sick days is critical to a productive and vibrant economy. When workers are provided with paid sick days, employers benefit from reduced turnover, higher productivity, and reduced spread of contagion in the workplace. If workers were provided just seven paid sick days per year, as the Healthy Families Act proposes, our national economy would experience a net *savings* of \$8.1 billion per year, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

In a nation that values families, worker should not have to choose between their jobs and their health or a family member's health. Concerned citizens around the country are taking action and advancing paid sick days initiatives at the city and state level. We urge you to demonstrate your strong commitment to America's working families by becoming a cosponsor of the Healthy Families Act. Thank you.

Sincerely,

National Partnership for Women & Families
9to5 Bay Area
9to5 Colorado
9to5 Poverty Network Initiative -- Wisconsin
9to5, National Association of Working Women
ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)
AFL-CIO
AFSCME
Alpha One, Maine
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee
American Medical Student Association
American Public Health Association
American Rights at Work
Americans for Democratic Action
Asian American Justice Center
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, (APALA, AFL-CIO)
Association of Flight Attendants--CWA
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Atlanta 9to5
Atlanta/North Georgia Labor Council
Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Women's Health Imperative
Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW)
Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Labor Network

Center for American Progress
Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Church Women United
Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Community of Christ
Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Council on American-Islamic Relations
DC Employment Justice Center
Demos: A Network for Ideas & Action
Docs for Tots
Economic Opportunity Institute
Epilepsy Foundation
Equality Maine
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FamiliesUSA
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving
Family Voices -- NJ
Feminist Majority
Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN)
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Georgia Stand-UP
Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition, Milwaukee, WI
Healthy Families, Healthy City Coalition, Madison, WI
Hmong American Women's Association, Milwaukee, WI
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for One Wisconsin

Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR)
 Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South
 Central Wisconsin
 Interfaith Worker Justice
 International Association of Machinists and
 Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
 International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)
 Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
 Jewish Women International
 Justice for Women Working Group of the National
 Council of Churches
 Kids Project
 Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
 (LCLAA)
 Labor Project for Working Families
 Laborers' International Union
 Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR)
 Legal Momentum
 LIUNA Women's Caucus
 Los Angeles 9to5
 LULAC
 Maine Center for Economic Policy
 Maine Women's Lobby
 Massachusetts Paid Family Leave Coalition
 Matria Healthcare, Inc.
 Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington
 Office
 Mexican American Legal Defense and Education
 Fund (MALDEF)
 MomsRising
 Montgomery County Commission for Women
 Ms. Foundation for Women
 Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation
 National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good
 Shepherd
 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
 National Association for the Advancement of
 Colored People (NAACP)
 National Association of Child Care Resource and
 Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)
 National Association of Mothers' Centers
 (NAMC)/MOTHERS Initiative
 National Association of School Nurses
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Baptist Convention
 National Council of Jewish Women
 National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
 National Council of Women's Organizations
 National Education Association (NEA)
 National Employment Law Project

National Employment Lawyers Association
 National Family Caregivers Association
 National Organization for Women (NOW)
 National Respite Coalition
 National Urban League
 National Women's Health Network
 National Women's Law Center
 NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice
 Lobby
 New Jersey Parent-to-Parent
 New Prospect Family Praise and Worship Center
 North Carolina Justice Center
 Office and Professional Employees International
 Union (OPEIU)
 OWL, the voice of midlife and older women
 ParentsWork
 PathWays PA (PA Family Economic Self Sufficiency
 Project)
 Pennsylvania AFL-CIO
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 Pride At Work
 Public Justice Center
 RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
 RESULTS
 SEIU District 1199 OH/WV/KY
 Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
 Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, New Jersey
 Take Care Net
 The AIDS Action Council
 The AIDS Institute
 The Jewish Council for Public Affairs
 The United Methodist Church – General Board of
 Church and Society
 Trust for America's Health
 Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
 UNITE HERE International Union
 United Auto Workers (UAW)
 United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries
 United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)
 United Steelworkers (USW)
 Voices for America's Children
 Wider Opportunities for Women
 Women Employed
 Women in Need Industries, Maine
 Women Work! The National Network for Women's
 Employment
 Women's Law Project
 Workers' Rights Center, Madison, WI
 Working America

Congressional Delegation Record and Evaluation

Please fill this out or type and email the answers after your meeting with your representative.

Thank you!! Fax to Liz Weiss at 202-543-1297 or email to lweiss@iwj.org

Date: _____ **Location (City, State)** _____

Meeting with: Sen./Rep. _____

(Note if you met a staffperson and his/her name and title.)

Topic of meeting: _____

Attendees (Name, Title, Email, and Phone)

What went well?

What did not go well?

What was the member's/staffer's response? What did they agree or disagree with? Will they do what you asked (cosponsor a bill, *not* cosponsor a bill, etc)? If not, why not?

What next steps were promised (such as providing additional information)? Who will carry these out?