

## SICK PAY ORDER SIGNALS UNHEALTHY TIMES FOR ORLANDO BUSINESSES



Citizens for a Greater Orlando, decided to take the initiative to address work-related problems, on behalf of their fellow citizens, by starting a campaign to gather 20,000 petition signatures that would enforce their questions being put to the ballot. The groups was tired of low-wage earners opting to go to work when ill, rather than stay at home and recover, unable to afford missing a day's wages. The dilemma was unfair and, Citizens for a Greater Orlando believes the ballot proposal offers a remedy. Question No one, would compel Orlando employers, who have a minimum of 15 employees, to allow employees to accumulate paid sick time, a regulation that more than 50 percent of private-sector workers in Orange County do not have. The proposed plans, enforces employers to allow employees and hour of sick time for every 37 hours they clock at the workplace, allowing for a maximum of 56 hours maximum. This time, the workers could use when they fall sick or have to take care of ailing family members. However, smaller businesses would be exempted from compulsory sick pay but they would not be allowed to penalize workers who are absent owing to sickness. Citizens for a Greater Orlando is a new coalition of small businesses, workers, unions and activist groups, who are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that their attempts to get the paid-sick-leave proposal on the November ballot is successful. The group is trying its utmost to get the 20,000 petition signatures needed, to place the questions on the ballot. Even though, the move is a genuine and commendable attempt to remedy a wrong and address a social concern, analysts feel that it is inopportune and excessively arduous. Businesses in Florida are barely managing to survive and even though Florida's jobless rate declined slightly, it was hardly time to say that the economy was booming. Businesses are hard pressed with myriad problems and probably would not be able to bear the extra burden of sick pay. In figures an hour for every 37 hours, may not seem much, but when translated into real money the consequences are much clearer. Wall Street Journal states that a company with 30 employees, at \$10 an hour, the "cost providing seven paid sick days could add nearly \$19,000 a year, including payroll taxes." Moreover, adopting the regulation would further constrain small businesses and also lessen hiring. Helen Darling, president and CEO of the National Business Group on Health, a nonprofit employer advocacy group in Washington said, that employers not providing paid sick leave aren't "being mean-spirited." They simply can't afford it. Orlando officials, whilst agreeing that they were understanding and sensitive towards the cause, were reluctant and disinclined to impose such an excessive burden on the businesses, feeling that in the current scenario, businesses need to be given a boost. A recent Public Welfare Foundation revealed that , "one in six workers had been fired, suspended, punished or threatened with termination for staying home because of illness or to care for a sick child or other family member." Moreover, it was highly unlikely that low-wage workers, such as Central Florida's service industry workers, have paid sick days. Analysts feel that both the workers and the employers should make their own decisions, based on their own strengths and weaknesses. Treating the workers right and understanding their problems, especially when they are sick, certainly creates a healthier working environment, but there should be no legal enforcement, the decisions should be left to the businesses.

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