

Can't Afford to Take a Sick Day? Join the Club.

Some not-so-fun facts and figures about paid sick leave

Drum Major Institute; Adapted by Cynthia Peters

- A. Rank of “stay home when you are sick” on the list of Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for preventing the flu: **2**
- B. Proportion of employees without paid sick leave who worry that taking time off when they are sick would jeopardize their job: **1 in 3**
- C. Percentage of employees without paid sick leave who say they cannot afford to take unpaid time off work when they become ill: **58**
- D. Number of countries that require employers to provide a week or more of paid sick leave annually: **136**
- E. Number of days of paid sick leave guaranteed by the United States: **0**
- F. Number of private sector employees in the U.S. without a single paid sick day at work: **46 million**
- G. Percentage of Americans who agree that employers should be required to provide paid sick days, according to a 2007 poll: **80**
- H. Average lost productivity to businesses per employee per year when employees show up to work despite suffering from a respiratory infection: **\$133.84**
- I. Maximum number of hours the flu virus remains alive on an inanimate surface like a door knob, office desk or telephone: **8**
- J. Percentage of food and accommodation workers who don't have paid sick leave: **86**
- K. Percentage of N.Y. City restaurant workers who say they had gone to work sick: **52**
- L. Number of well-baby check-ups the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends for healthy children during the first year of life: **7**
- M. Number of workers who do not have paid leave to care for sick children or bring them to the doctor: **86 million**
- N. Odds that a woman living in poverty loses pay when she stays home from work to care for a sick child: **3 in 4**

Source: Find the original piece and sources at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras>.



Illustration by Matt Kristek reprinted with permission from the UMASS Labor Extension Program's Workers' Rights Curriculum. Find the full curriculum at <www.cpcs.umb.edu/lep>.

Take it Further

1. Look at A on the previous page. What do you think is the CDC's #1 recommendation? Check your answer on the CDC website. Make a list of 10 things you could do to prevent the flu. How does it compare to the CDC's list?
2. Look at D and E. Are you surprised? Look up the source. Do you trust the information? Can you find another source to back it up? Do you think a government should require employers to provide sick days? Why or why not?
3. Write about a time that you needed to take a sick day.
4. Look at C. If there are 100 million payroll employees in the United States, how many of them say they can't afford to take unpaid time off work when they become ill?
5. According to G, 80% of Americans think government should require employers to provide paid sick time. If there are about 200 million adults in America, how many is that? What actions could all those people take to convince the government of their beliefs?
6. Write a caption for the cartoon above. Draw a cartoon showing what happens next.