



Obama uses LinkedIn to endorse paid sick days

EMPLOYER ADVOCATE | JAN 16, 2015

President Barack Obama took his long-standing pursuit of paid sick leave for employees directly to the people via business social network LinkedIn on January 14, 2015. In a statement posted by Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to the president, Obama will press Congress to pass an act that would allow Americans to earn up to seven days a year of paid sick time.

In her post titled "Why We Think Paid Leave is a Worker's Right, Not a Privilege", Jarrett wrote that the administration is launching a push to mandate paid sick leave, calling on Congress to pass the Healthy Families Act (which provides for covered employees to earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to seven days) and simultaneously asking states and cities to enact similar laws. Jarrett also set forth Obama's other initiatives that include a new plan to help states create paid leave programs, and provide new funding through the Department of Labor for feasibility studies that will help other states and municipalities figure out the best way to implement programs of their own.

Currently, under the Family and Medical Leave Act, workers are eligible for 12 weeks of unpaid leave for specific family and medical reasons, such as the birth of a child or caring for a parent with a serious health condition. Many employers, including the federal government, do not pay for that leave. Jarrett reported to CNN that in his 2015 budget, the President will propose \$2.2 billion to reimburse up to five states for three years for their costs associated with implementing a paid leave policy, \$35 million in grants to states and \$1 million through the Labor Department for feasibility studies around providing paid leave programs.

Last year, the President's budget included \$500,000 for feasibility studies, which three states and the District of Columbia used to help craft what will become paid leave programs, she added.

And the President will sign a Presidential Memorandum that will ensure federal employees have access to at least 6 weeks of paid sick leave when a new child arrives or to care for ill family members and propose that Congress offer 6 weeks of paid administrative leave as well.

The push for paid sick days and paid leave stems, in part, from last year's first-ever White House Summit on Working Families, said Jarrett. The reasoning behind paid sick leave is said to be two-fold – provide flexibility for workers and ultimately improve the financial bottom lines of the companies that implement paid sick leave policies.

So why use LinkedIn to reveal the news about these initiatives? Jarrett touts LinkedIn as the world's largest online audience of professionals and employers and, as such, the best place to effectuate change:

If you're an employer, ask yourself what you're doing for your workers on paid sick days and paid leave. If you're looking for a job, ask yourself what you want out of your employer.

Although far from being resolved, the current administration's keen focus on mandated paid sick leave should spur an employer to be proactive in analyzing the impact such a policy would have on its workforce and its bottom line.