

[Labor & Employment Law Daily Wrap Up, FEDERAL LEGISLATION— Emergency paid leave bill would help workers deal with coronavirus, \(Mar. 6, 2020\)](#)

Labor & Employment Law Daily Wrap Up

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By [Pamela Wolf, J.D.](#)

The bill would require all employers to provide an additional 14 days of paid sick leave, available immediately at the beginning of a public health emergency, including the current coronavirus crisis.

As lawmakers raise important questions about the Trump Administration's readiness to effectively manage the COVID-19 outbreak, Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) are taking action to help workers deal with potential workplace realities and avoid job loss in the event that they or a family member contract the coronavirus.

The two lawmakers have introduced new, emergency paid sick leave legislation that builds on the Healthy Families Act (HFA) that Murray and DeLauro introduced in March 2019 and in every Congress since 2004. The new bill would go further, to provide paid sick days immediately to workers in light of the coronavirus crisis, and in preparation for future public health emergencies.

This emergency paid sick day legislation would mandate that all employers permit workers to accrue seven days of paid sick leave and immediately provide an additional 14 days in the event of any public health emergency, including the current coronavirus crisis.

Emergency paid leave. Specifically the legislation would:

- Require all employers to allow workers to gradually earn seven days of paid sick leave.
- Require all employers to provide an additional 14 days of paid sick leave, available immediately at the beginning of a public health emergency, including the current coronavirus crisis.
- Ensure that paid sick leave covers days when a child's school is closed due to a public health emergency, when an employer is closed due to public health emergency, or if a family member is quarantined or isolated due to a public health emergency.

Keeping everybody safe. Murray and DeLauro noted that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines advise people to stay home if they are sick. But for many workers, including restaurant workers, truck drivers, people in the service industry, and others, staying home from work may mean losing a paycheck or losing a job. The new legislation won't just ensure that workers can take care of themselves and their families, it will also ensure that workers can help keep their communities safe.

The lawmakers pointed out that 27 percent of private sector workers don't have paid sick days and will go without pay if they can't show up at work.

"The coronavirus is highly contagious and the problem isn't going away anytime soon," Senator Murray said in a [release](#). "Workers want to do the right thing for themselves, their families, and their communities—so especially in the middle of public health crises like this, staying home sick shouldn't have to mean losing a paycheck or a job. This bill would immediately give workers the ability to care for themselves, their families, and help keep their communities safe. We need to pass it without delay."

"The lack of paid sick days could make coronavirus harder to contain in the United States compared with other countries that have universal sick leave policies in place," said Congresswoman DeLauro. "No one should face the impossible choice of caring for their health or keeping their paycheck or job, especially when a sudden public

health crisis occurs. But millions of hard-working people must make this decision every time they get sick or a family member needs care."

According to DeLauro, low-income workers and their families could be hit even harder by the virus because low wage jobs "are at the forefront of not providing sick leave benefits."

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