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## Ohio sick-day proposal pulled from ballot

Congress considering legislation on mandatory paid-time off for employees

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FAIRFIELD COUNTY - It's been described by some local business owners as a bad idea, an economic development killer and a step in the wrong direction.

Issue 4, an initiative to mandate all businesses with 25 or more employees offer a set number of sick days to their employees, was supposed to appear on Ohio's Nov. 4 ballot.

But the union and coalition that spearheaded the initiative have since decided to remove Issue 4 from the ballot at the urging from Ohio officials such as Gov. Ted Strickland and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown.

But business owners who opposed Issue 4 shouldn't breathe a sigh of relief just yet.

A federal initiative called the Healthy Families Act, spearheaded by U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., is making its way through Congress.

The bill has language similar to that of Issue 4 and could end up gaining approval from Strickland. He supported the removal of Issue 4 from the ballot because he was concerned it would put Ohio at a disadvantage, according to a news release from his office.

"There is no specific initiative Gov. Strickland supports, but he has made it clear that he would support the enactment of federal legislation requiring paid sick days nationally," said Keith Dailey, Strickland's press secretary.

Mike Orlando, director of Fairfield County Job & Family Services, said he was torn on the Issue 4 legislation.

But he isn't sure a federal initiative would be the best alternative.

"I would have preferred the option of putting the issue on the ballot because I'm not a fan of employee sick-day policies being federally mandated," Orlando said.

JFS has 230 employees and offers a full benefits package, including 10 paid days for holidays and vacation leave, which is based upon years of service.

JFS employees, like all county employees, accumulate 4.6 hours of sick leave for every 80 hours worked per the Ohio Revised Code, said Aundrea Cordle, human resources director for the agency and Fairfield County.

Sick time is rolled over from year to year if an employee doesn't use the days they've accumulated, Cordle said.

It now is making its way through Congress and would allow all states to be put on a level playing field, said Joanna Kubler, communications director for Sen. Sherrod Brown's office.

Brown is a co-sponsor of the bill, Kubler said. The bill would require federal, state and private sector employers with 15 or more employees to provide their full-time staff with a minimum of seven paid sick days a year.

The cost of implementing such a bill, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would cost \$3 to \$4 million annually.

Orlando plans to find out what the proposed federal legislation provides, an option he said he didn't have a chance to really do with Issue 4.

"Having sick time available is good because it gives (employees) the ability to balance work and family life," Orlando said. "You have to have good jobs for them to go to."

DeRolph also plans to study up more on the federal Healthy Families Act.

He said he believes Strickland's opposition to Issue 4 was a step in the right direction to getting the initiative pulled from the ballot.

"It's unusual for Strickland to come out against something," DeRolph said. "No matter how you feel about the man, you have to admire him for doing what he thought was right."

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