

MEMORANDUM

TO: The National Partnership For Women & Families
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: August 30, 2011
RE: Survey Findings On Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Law

On July 5th, 2011, Connecticut became the first state to pass a law giving many workers the right to earn paid sick days. On behalf of the National Partnership for Women & Families, Hart Research Associates conducted a phone survey among 500 registered voters in Connecticut just after the signing of this new legislation. The survey was conducted from July 26 to 28, 2011, and has a margin of error of ± 4.4 percentage points. The following memo outlines the key points of this research.

Overview Of Findings

These survey findings demonstrate that the issue of paid sick days brings together a consensus coalition of voters from across the political spectrum. In fact, a solid majority of all voters regardless of partisanship have a favorable opinion of the new law. Voters reward legislators who voted in favor of the paid sick days law, and associate an array of favorable traits with elected officials who supported this legislation. In addition, an overwhelming share of voters believes that paid sick days laws protect working families and balance the needs of employees and employers. Moreover, the survey results show that paid sick days has significant potential as a mobilizing issue during campaigns and elections, and particularly energizes hard-to-reach constituencies.

Key Findings

1. Republicans, independents, and Democrats alike share a favorable view of the new law that allows service workers in businesses with 50 or more employees to earn up to five paid sick days a year. Even with an aggressive opposition campaign mounted by organized business interests during the debate over this legislation, voters across the political and demographic spectrum maintain a positive view of this new law.

- 73% of all registered voters favor this law, including 61% of Republicans, 70% of independents, and 87% of Democrats. Paid sick days resonate across the demographic spectrum as well, with more than 70% of voters in every age group, income level, and race favoring the law.

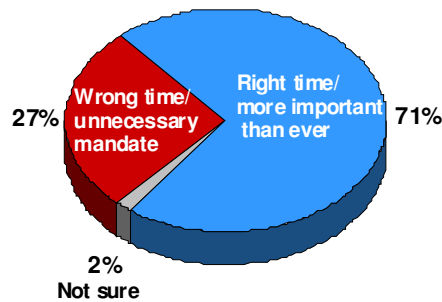
- Women are particularly strong in their support of the new law—fully 83% of women favor this legislation (including a strong majority (56%) who say they strongly favor it), compared with a solid 63% of men.
- Furthermore, women are particularly likely to draw positive inferences about state senators and representatives who voted to support the law—which strongly suggests that this issue provides a special opportunity for elected leaders to engage in a constructive and meaningful dialogue with women voters. For example, fully two-thirds (67%) of women voters say that elected officials who support this initiative are more likely to be in touch with the real-life challenges of working people and families, and 72% say these leaders are standing up for people like me and people I care about. These also are traits that male voters use to characterize supporters of the new law, but the measurable affinity this issue has for women presents an opportunity for elected leaders to have a dialogue and make inroads with this constituency without any risk of losing the male vote.

2. Despite heightened concerns about the economy, jobs, and small businesses, voters overwhelmingly say that the paid sick days law is essential to protecting workers and middle-class families who are vulnerable to losing income or losing their jobs because of illness or a child's medical needs.

- One of the most dramatic findings from this survey is the extent to which voters decisively reject concerns that this new law would burden businesses in a very weak economy and instead affirm that it is an important component of protecting workers and strengthening families' economic security. The chart below depicts voters' reaction to two statements they could use to characterize their reaction to the new paid sick days law; and here too, support for this issue is reflected across the political spectrum.

Wrong Time: The new paid sick days law imposes an unnecessary mandate on businesses at a time when the economy continues to perform poorly and jobs are scarce. When government imposes requirements on business, costs rise and businesses struggle. Even those who support the principle of providing paid sick days worry that now is not the right time to impose these new requirements.

Right Time: At a time when working people need to be able to keep their jobs and support their families, the new paid sick days law is more important than ever. Workers are vulnerable now and cannot afford to lose income or risk being fired simply because they have the flu or a child needs medical care. Rebuilding the middle class and strengthening families' economic security requires common-sense protections like paid sick days.



Right Time Versus Wrong Time		
	Right Time	Wrong Time
	%	%
Republicans	52	47
Independents	65	33
Democrats	90	9
Women	79	19
Men	62	35

3. At a time when state lawmakers' approval ratings are reaching new lows, voters reward elected leaders who support the paid sick days law. A unique feature of this survey matched respondents to their elected leaders' actual votes on the legislation. Voters were asked specifically about both their state senator's and state representative's votes either in favor or against the bill.

- In the current political climate, voters have a net-unfavorable opinion of the Connecticut State Legislature by 34% unfavorable to 28% favorable (39% are neutral or unsure). Given these critical marks, these data make clear that the paid sick days law provides an important opportunity for lawmakers to leverage their support for this issue.
- Voters whose state senator voted in favor of the law said knowing this makes them more favorable toward that senator in the next election by 32 points (55% more favorable, 23% less favorable, 20% no difference.) Not

surprisingly, voters whose state senator voted against the law said this information made them less favorable toward that state senator by the same 32-point margin (54% less favorable, 22% more favorable, 21% no difference).

- Voters whose state representative voted in favor of the law said knowing this made them more favorable toward that House member in the next election by 41 points (59% more favorable, 18% less favorable, 20% no difference). By contrast, voters whose state representative voted against the law said this information made them less favorable toward that House member by 31 points (54% less favorable, 23% more favorable, 19% no difference).

4. At a time when it is increasingly hard to engage voters in political and policy dialogues, the issue of paid sick leave provides a meaningful and relevant forum to rally voters' interest and attention to policy issues.

- Two-thirds (64%) of all voters say that they are more likely to pay attention and want to be involved in campaigns and elections when issues such as paid sick days are discussed as part of the dialogue.
- This issue is a particular draw to voters in lower-income households and non-college-educated voters who often are among the hardest to reach constituencies.

Strategic Recommendations

Paid sick days has proven a resoundingly positive issue in Connecticut for voters across the political spectrum. Republicans, Democrats, and independents, men and women, high- and low-income voters—all see the state's paid sick days law as in keeping with the appropriate balance between the needs of families struggling to make ends meet and the needs of companies working to stay afloat during the recession.

The current job market and economic climate have not given opponents of paid sick days the upper hand in this debate. On the contrary, middle-class families see this legislation as a common-sense balance between the needs of business and the challenges facing people like them. Elected officials can use this issue to connect with some of the hardest to reach voters—particularly those who are lower income or less educated—without the risk of losing their traditional constituencies.

Voters see legislators who support this initiative as in touch with the needs of their districts, and are willing to reward these members during the campaign season. This wide margin of support provides a strong foundation for state and federal lawmakers elsewhere to emulate this success, and similarly earn stronger support from a broad array of core constituencies.