

# Eugene could be next to guarantee paid sick days

EUGENE — Eugene could become the second city in Oregon to guarantee all workers the right to sick leave. Portland passed a sick leave ordinance in March 2013, but a bill to take it statewide died later in the year in a committee of the Oregon House.

Now a labor-community coalition has formed in Eugene to push an ordinance, similar to the coalition that helped pass it in Portland. Known as

Everybody Benefits Eugene, the group had its first success when Eugene City Council held a Feb. 24 work session on the idea. A second council work session is scheduled for April 14.

“This is about Eugenians doing what’s right for Eugene,” says Lili Hoag, a Eugene native who studied family policy at the London School of Economics. Hoag, now policy director at the group Family Forward Oregon,

said it appears there is majority support on Eugene City Council for an ordinance, though no specific proposal has been introduced yet.

City Council member Claire Syrett — a former organizer with the Jobs with Justice chapter known as the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network — is championing an ordinance, along with fellow council member Alan Zelenka, an energy consultant. At the February work session, five of the eight City Council members spoke positively of a sick leave mandate, and Mayor Kitty Piercy is said to be in favor.

If an ordinance is unveiled at the April work session, Hoag said City Council would likely schedule a public hearing and take citizen comment before voting on it.

Kevin Billman, director of legislative and community affairs for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, said sick leave is a very important issue

for the roughly 600 Local 555 members who work in Eugene Fred Meyer, Safeway and Albertsons stores. That’s because their union contract provides a paid sick leave benefit, but they can’t use it until the third day of an illness. So the first two days they or a child are sick, they either lose wages or they go to work sick or send a sick child to school.

“It’s a hard choice,” Billman said. “Do they take care of their health or their finances?”

UFCW has tried to negotiate first-day sick leave, but Billman said grocery employers have dug in their heels on that issue. A City ordinance would take it out of their hands — and set a level playing field on that issue for all Eugene employers.

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research estimated that 51 percent of private-sector employees in Eugene — over 25,000 workers — have no sick days.

Since no ordinance has been introduced, there are no specifics to debate yet. Under Portland’s ordinance, workers can use up to 40 hours a year of paid sick leave. It would add no more than 2 percent to an employer’s payroll costs if every worker used every hour of it. And for workers, it would be a major human rights advance, and a right enjoyed by most workers in other industrialized countries. Advocates say paid sick days also reduce the spread of illness and increase productivity.

Besides UFCW Local 555, the sick leave campaign is supported by the Oregon School Employees Association, AFSCME, Oregon Nurses Association, Service Employees, and the Fire Fighters. The Working Families Party of Oregon has conducted door-to-door canvass to build support. The campaign is also backed by the NAACP and by over 45 businesses organized by the small business group Main Street Alliance.

## Major League Soccer referee lockout ends with 5-year pact

The lockout of referees by Major League Soccer (MLS) and the Professional Referee Organization (PRO) ended March 20 after the first two weekends of games when PRO and the Professional Soccer Referees Association (PSRA) agreed on a five-year labor contract.

PRO locked out the referees before the beginning of the new season March 7 and used replacement officials.

The PSRA became the National Labor Relations Board-certified representative of the referees and game officials last May, and the two sides have bargained since July. The new agreement was ratified by the union membership and the PRO executive board.

“First contracts sometimes pose difficult challenges as the parties seek to

define the parameters of a new formal relationship,” said Scot L. Beckenbaugh, acting director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, which brokered the talks.

The agreement runs until Jan. 15, 2019. Lucas Middlebrook, a PRSA lawyer, said the deal includes “substantially better” compensation and “a number of non-economic work rule protections such as a just-cause standard for certain disciplinary matters and standardization of fitness testing.

“In addition, the officials now have a contract protecting important quality-of-life items such as travel standards, vacation time and advance notice of match assignments,” he told Associated Press in an email.

## GOP targets NLRB rule to streamline union elections

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressional Republicans introduced legislation last month to block the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) from implementing a proposed new rule that would give workers a more timely opportunity to vote in a union election.

As it is, the NLRB election process is riddled with delay that provides too

many opportunities for employers to manipulate and abuse the legal process in order to stall union elections and mount aggressive anti-union campaigns.

The NLRB proposed its new rule in February. NLRB Chairman Mark Gaston Pearce said the proposals “are intended to improve the process for all

parties, in all cases, whether nonunion employees are seeking a union to represent them or unionized employees are seeking to decertify a union.”

The proposal will let the NLRB “more effectively administer” labor law,” he said.

But on March 27, Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.) and Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) introduced a bill that would require the NLRB to let 35 days pass after employees file a petition before they are allowed to vote on forming a union. Their bill would also give employers 14 days to prepare their case before they go before an NLRB election official, and it would require the NLRB to identify who can vote before an election, rather than going back and doing it retrospectively.

The Republican attack on the NLRB is not new. Lawmakers from that party have for years pursued bills to eliminate the agency entirely, or at the very least to severely cripple its ability to function by defunding it.

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## You are invited to our Annual Meeting

April 15, 2014

Festivities beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Business Meeting at 7:00 p.m.



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