

Hot button issue: economic benefits of paid leaves

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On March 26 at Tulane University, Heidi Hartmann, president and founder of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, will lecture on the health and economic benefits of sick and family paid leaves. (photo by Chet Susslin, National Journal)

For many employees, a doctor's visit may cost one-half to a full day's pay, and many workers opt to skip the appointment. It's a challenge that employers, policy makers and even the president are bringing to the forefront.

Heidi Hartmann, president and founder of the Institute for Women's Policy Research,

will lecture on the health and economic benefits of sick and family paid leaves during her visit on Thursday (March 26) to the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. She will speak at noon in the Diboll Auditorium at 1440 Canal St.

An [analysis](#) by the institute that Hartman leads revealed approximately 41 percent of all Louisiana workers lack even a single paid sick day. This lack of access is even more pronounced among low-income and part-time workers.

Access to paid sick days promotes safe and healthy work environments by reducing the spread of illness and workplace injuries as well as healthcare costs, Hartmann said. Paid sick days also support children and families by helping parents meet their children's health needs. Maternity and family leave is yet another hurdle that must be crossed in the paid leave saga.

The national Family and Medical Leave Act provides job-protected, unpaid leave to care for the birth or adoption of a new child, but only three states offer paid family leave. New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu recently instituted a rule that allows new mothers eight weeks paid leave, while husbands or domestic partners are allowed two weeks.

The [Mary Amelia Douglas-Whited Community Women's Health Education Center](#) at Tulane is providing research to Louisiana Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, who intends to introduce paid family and sick leave legislation during the upcoming legislative session. Currently, only 12 percent of U.S. private sector workers have access to paid family leave through their employer.

Hartmann's lecture, one of many in the [Jane Wilson Smith Lectureship Series](#), will further explain how the lack of these benefits affects employees.

Trina Vincent is a communications and media specialist with the Mary Amelia Women's Center for Women's Health at the Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine.

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