

# VIEWPOINTS

Sus  
Biel  
Pub

**OTHERS SAY** JEFF MOSELEY  
Special Contributor

## Austin setting a dangerous precedent with sick leave

On behalf of our members, local chambers and others whom the city of Austin's paid sick leave policy will affect, the Texas Association of Business is the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit to stop it.

In February, Austin passed an ordinance requiring private businesses to provide paid sick leave to approximately 87,000 residents. It's a policy we believe is unjust, illegal and hinders an individual business owner's rights to make independent decisions that affect their company. Unfortunately, campaigns in San Antonio and Dallas are also underway for similar ordinances.

This lawsuit is not about the implementation of the paid sick leave policy; it's about local officials ignoring the economic concerns of small businesses, which are the heart of our state's economy. In fact, many Austin businesses already adopt policies that accommodate illness and instances of hardship with their employees but do so in a way that works for their specific business needs.

Quite simply, this policy — as with other government-mandated regulations on businesses — puts an additional cost on companies, and they must find a way to pay for it to keep their business running.

It isn't just the businesses being hurt by this government mandate. Workers who would prefer more take-home pay and fewer benefits no longer have this option. In fact, more than 30 percent of a worker's total compensation already goes to provide benefits; according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Every family has its unique situation. So, while some may be fine with



Ann Beeson, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Priorities, speaks in front of pictures of people in favor of mandated sick pay during a public forum in January. Austin has since enacted an ordinance requiring sick pay. NICK WAGNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

**It isn't just the businesses being hurt by this government mandate. Workers who would prefer more take-home pay ... no longer have this option.**

this, many families may prefer to trade those benefits for a 30 percent increase in take-home pay. Rather than providing a new benefit, mandated paid sick leave cuts employment options.

There are examples of other U.S. cities and states — San Francisco, Connecticut and Seattle — that have similar sick leave mandates where employers were forced to raise prices, cut pay and benefits, and even lay off workers. We cannot let this happen to Texas businesses. A third of

workers experienced layoffs or reduced hours, bonuses, raises and benefits in the wake of the city's paid sick-leave mandate, according to a survey by the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Almost half the employees saw reduced benefits; a quarter of businesses laid off workers or reduced their pay; and 1 in 5 businesses raised prices, according to a survey by the Employment Policies Institute.

The Texas Association of Business fights for a pro-business environment that creates jobs and paychecks. When local governments overstep their power with detrimental ordinances that are bad for business and our state's economy, we must act.

Next session, we are calling on our statewide leaders to join this fight by giving Texas businesses a legislative remedy to this over-reaching ordinance and keep our state thriving and open for business.

Moseley is CEO of the Texas Association of Business.