

Conn. becomes 1st state requiring paid sick time

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Connecticut has become the first state to require companies to provide employees with paid sick leave with legislation signed into law by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy (top), who announced his action Tuesday.

The measure requires businesses in the service industry with 50 or more employees to allow workers to accrue one hour of sick time for every 40 hours worked. Backers estimate that between 200,000 and 300,000 workers will benefit. Opponents said the law will make Connecticut less competitive.

School bus driver Desiree Rosado appeared before lawmakers urging her support of the bill. Rosado, a mother of three from Groton, said she has no sick days, just two personal days a year that she can use when she's sick. Regardless of whether the bill passed, Rosado said she might look for a new job that offers better benefits.

"The only reason I'm doing what I'm doing is because of the kids," she said. "They're getting older, and I think I'm going to be looking for other things because of the benefits."

The legislation was years in the making. It narrowly passed the Senate on May 25 on an 18-17 vote and was approved June 4 by the House of Representatives on a 76-65 vote after more than 11 hours of debate.

It was the fourth year supporters tried to get the bill through. Previous efforts withered under veto threats by then-Gov. M. Jodi Rell, a Republican.

Malloy's signature was expected, but the absence of a gathering to mark the first-in-the-nation law took its chief legislative backer by surprise. He signed the bill into law Friday but didn't announce his action until Tuesday.

"I thought we were going to have a signing ceremony," said Sen. Edith Prague, the Labor and Public Employees Committee co-chairwoman who championed the bill. "But he signed it and that's the main thing."

A Malloy spokesman said the governor might schedule a ceremonial bill signing, but right now is putting his stamp on bills as they reach his desk.

Malloy, a Democrat, made his support of paid sick leave a campaign issue last year, saying it was to safeguard public health. He persuaded wavering lawmakers to vote for it, Prague said.

"He was the key factor, there's no doubt about it," she said.