

Wisconsin Democrats Push Family Medical Leave Act Protections

Written by Wisconsin Senate Democrats
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Despite public support, Senate Bill 385's future uncertain in GOP-controlled Senate.

MADISON - While family dynamics have changed significantly since the 1950's, many workplace policies haven't kept pace. In order to update worker protections and increase workplace flexibility, Sen. **Janis Ringhand** (D-Evansville) and 35 other Democratic lawmakers are pushing a bill to modernize Wisconsin's Family Medical Leave law.

The proposal, [Senate Bill 385](#) (SB 385), has received broad public support but faces an uphill battle in the Republican-controlled legislature.



"Families in Wisconsin are working harder than ever, but our laws simply haven't kept pace with changes in the modern workplace," said Senate Democratic Leader **Jennifer Shilling** (D-La Crosse). "Whether it's a worker trying to care for an ailing relative or a parent needing to stay home with a sick child, we need to look at commonsense reforms that address modern workplace challenges. By reforming outdated policies and expanding workplace flexibilities, we can strengthen our middle class and enable businesses to be more competitive."

SB 385 expands coverage for workers who take leave to care for a grandparent, grandchild or sibling and creates new protections for relatives of active duty service members. Additionally, the proposed legislation creates new options for private sector employees to voluntarily purchase coverage through a Family Medical Leave Insurance program.

"We know that access to sick leave helps prevent the spread of contagious diseases and improve workplace productivity," added Shilling. "All businesses, from Fortune 500 companies down to local mom and pop stores, benefit from a safe and healthy workplace. With simple, commonsense updates to Wisconsin's Family Medical Leave law, we can create new opportunities for families and increase our ability to compete in a 21st century global economy."

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A public hearing on SB 385 today attracted broad public support, however, many Republicans remain opposed to the plan. Republican leaders have indicated they intend to adjourn the 2016 legislative session in February or March, leaving only a short window to advance legislative proposals.

Legislative writer Tony Palese contributed to this story.