

Dayton Daily News

Ohio coalition pulls sick days proposal from ballot

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COLUMBUS — Business leaders and Democratic Gov. Ted Strickland don't always see eye to eye, but neither side wanted a November ballot issue requiring businesses to give full-time employees seven paid sick days a year.

They got what they wanted Thursday, Sept. 4, when a union-led coalition backing the issue ended its campaign.

Strickland, usually a labor ally, all but doomed the issue when he announced on Aug. 21 that he opposed the ballot proposal. But that doesn't mean Strickland opposes granting employees more sick leave.

He pledged support for a federal bill that would apply to all states, not just Ohio.

If approved, the issue would have applied to businesses with 25 or more employees. Now, union leaders will put their efforts behind a bill co-sponsored by U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said Becky Williams, president of District 1199, Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Williams appeared at a press conference Thursday with Brown, Strickland and Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher, the state's economic development director.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's pledge to support a federal paid sick days bill and Strickland's and Brown's promise to back Obama helped the coalition decide to pull the issue, Williams said. "We absolutely believe workers should not go to work sick," she said.

She also said she wanted to avoid a "vitriolic" and divisive campaign. She said her union has spent from \$1.7 million to \$1.8 million on the campaign.

Business groups were delighted.

"If you open up your window, you probably could hear the cheers of the Dayton business community," Chris Kershner, vice president of public policy and economic development for

the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce, said in an e-mail. "The business community is always concerned when unfunded government mandates help direct the operation of their businesses."

Ohio would have been the first state to approve a bill requiring paid sick days and this could have harmed Ohio's economy, said Strickland.

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