

THE Durango HERALD

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Editorials

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Endorsements: No on family and medical leave

Friday, Sept. 4, 2020 5:33 AM Updated: Friday, Sept. 4, 2020 3:35 PM

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One of the most significant questions on the November ballot is the creation of a paid family and medical leave enterprise within the state's Department of Labor.

Most employers and employees in the state would combine to fund a pool that would be distributed to those who want to take paid time off – 12 weeks maximum annually – for childbirth, to support a family member with a serious health condition, dealing with domestic abuse or about to be deployed by the military. And more.

Job protection is included, and retaliation forbidden.

Employees would be eligible to receive up to 90% of their weekly wage if they earn less than 50% of a to-be-determined state average, or 50% if they earn more than the average. Funding for the pool would come in the first year from a maximum of 0.9% of an employee's wages, then in the following years, 1.2%. Up to 50% of would be contributed by the employee; the balance by the employer.

Wage withholding would begin Jan. 1, 2023, and disbursements would start a year later.

Federal employees are excluded, and local governments can opt out. The self-employed can be included.

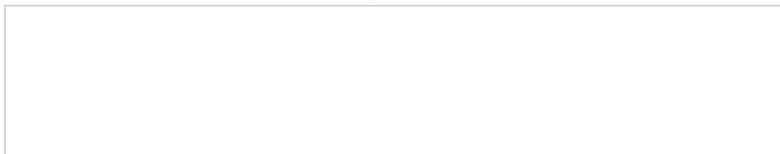
People who have some level of paid time off to take care of family emergencies – even 50% – can be more productive when they return. That is the reasonable argument to involve employers. But it is a cost to business, and in every payroll, employees will be contributing to a plan they may not need, or not need for as long as 12 weeks.

Given the size of the family and medical leave plan, in the establishment of what is certain to be a sizable administrative office and in its cost to employers and employees, the *Herald's* editorial board urges a No vote.

During the next year, possibly, there may be more conversations about the value of such a plan. For a lower cost, perhaps eight weeks would be adequate.

There are states that have a version of a family and medical leave plan, and we want Colorado to be as workforce-supportive as possible. But a No vote is best for today.

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