



## Planning a November 20, 2021 Action on Paid Sick Days at Grocery Stores

**Background:** Grocery store workers are one of the best examples of why Virginia needs a paid sick day standard. Two thirds of grocery store workers have no paid sick days even though these workers interact with people and handle food and grocery stores have thrived during the pandemic. Some stores have offered COVID-19 leave during the pandemic, but still do not offer a regular paid sick day policy so people can take off if they have a regular flu or illness or if they need to care for a sick child.

**Overall Goals:** VICPP is partnering with UFCW Local 400 to hold actions outside grocery stores the Saturday of November 20, 2021 (the Saturday before Thanksgiving) highlighting the need for all grocery store workers to have paid sick days. All actions will be short, fun, and social-distancing safe. Through the actions, we will:

- 1) highlight the importance of Virginia having a paid sick day standard – showing that even most grocery store workers don't have paid sick days despite handling food and interacting with the public.
- 2) generate statewide traditional and social media about the issue.
- 3) engage VICPP chapters, congregations, and individuals, as well as coalition partners (especially UFCW members) in targeted actions.
- 4) build relationships between VICPP and UFCW members.

**Stores:** The actions will focus on Harris Teeter and Food Lion stores throughout Virginia. Neither store chain offers regular paid sick days, although they did offer special COVID-19 only time off. There are Harris Teeter stores in Northern Virginia, Charlottesville, and Tidewater area. There are Food Lions all over the state.

**Structure of the Actions:** The actions will be planned for Saturday Nov 20. The suggested time is 10 a.m. but groups can plan another time if more convenient for their people. You can plan an action with as few as five or six people, but more people will have great impact. The actions will be short and will include the following:

- An interfaith litany focused on the need for all workers to have paid sick days and offering testimonials about the need for paid sick days.
- Flyers distributed to consumers urging them to contact their legislators to ensure that the workers at the grocery store where they shop will receive paid sick days.
- Participants will email their legislators: [vapaidsickdays.org/take-action](https://vapaidsickdays.org/take-action)
- Posting on social media and tagging [@vainterfaith](https://twitter.com/vainterfaith)

### Planning Your Action

- 1) **Commit.** Talk with your group or a few friends and decide you want to plan an action. As few as five or six people can have a good action and make a difference.
- 2) **Choose a store.** Choose which store you would like to visit. You can find the locations of the Harris Teeter and Food Lion stores by visiting their websites.
- 3) **Sign Up.** Sign up [here](#) to host an action. If you would like to join an action instead of hosting, you can see the [map of actions](#) here. Be sure to write a comment letting the action host know you'll be coming.
- 4) **Scope out the store.** You may be required to be on public land, not on the private property of the grocery store.
- 5) **Recruit participants.** Recruit some friends and family to attend.
- 6) **Recruit a few leaders.** Here are the roles you will need:
  - a. **Litany Leader.**

- b. **Clergy to lead prayer.** It is good to invite someone to lead a prayer at the beginning (although this can be skipped if no one feels comfortable).
  - c. **People to share stories.** Encourage a few participants to share their stories about not having paid sick days (or the stories of family members/friends).
  - d. **Delegation leader.** If you decide to send a delegation to meet with the grocery store owner (an option but not required), recruit someone to lead the delegation.
  - e. **Photographer.** Ask someone to take photos throughout that you can post on social media and share with VICPP.
- 7) **Print flyers for customers.** Plan on printing 100 or so copies of flyers you can distribute to customers. Each page prints multiple flyers and can be found in this toolkit. Both black and white and color options are enclosed.
- 8) **Print copies of the litany.** If you expect 10 people to participate, print 15 or 20 copies in case additional people attend. A copy of the litany can be found in this toolkit.

**Optional Delegation to the Manager:** Consider sending a small delegation of people into the store to talk with the store manager. The meeting is to ask the Manager to convey to his or her manager that people in the community would like the store to provide paid sick days to workers and to support a paid sick day standard in Virginia. The Manager will not be able make any commitment, but the message will get through to the upper management. You can also assure the Manager that the group gathered is peaceful and will only be outside the store a few minutes. (Sometimes store managers get nervous.)

**November 20, 2021 Schedule (can be adjusted as needed)**

- 9:50 a.m. Walk or drive over to the grocery store. Meet in the parking lot.
- 10:00 a.m. Distribute flyers to customers. If you want, send delegation to talk to the store manager.
- 10:10 a.m. Read the litany, hear the testimonies, send the emails: **vapaid sick days.org/take-action**
- 10:30 a.m. Take photos and depart
- Before noon Post on social media and tag **@vainterfaith**

**A word about the police**

We are not doing civil disobedience. We are simply doing a short prayer vigil/litany outside a grocery store. We should expect that the store managers will not be surprised to see us, so they may have called police ahead of time. You may be asked to stand on public land or move if you are blocking an entrance.

**A word about staffing**

These actions are entirely decentralized and rely on your involvement to make them a success.



## Paid Sick Day Litany

**Leader:** Thank you for coming to this action today. Thank you for advocating paid sick days for grocery store workers and the more than 1.2 million workers in Virginia who have no paid sick days. Let us begin with an opening prayer.

**Prayer by religious leader.** *Be sure to make the prayer one that is inclusive of various faith traditions as well as those without a particular faith.*

**Leader:** Welcome to this grocery store on one of the busiest grocery shopping days of the year. Many are shopping for their Thanksgiving meal preparations and getting excited about visiting their families. We affirm the importance of being with family, although we recognize that many of the Thanksgiving stories we heard as children are not accurate.

**All:** We seek to honor the Original People of this land and the truth of their stories.

**Leader:** Let us introduce ourselves to one another. Please give us your name, your group if you are with one, and why you are with us today.

*Introductions by each person*

**Leader:** Today we are here to focus on paid sick days. Around the commonwealth there are dozens of similar actions at grocery stores today. We are people of faith, union members, students, community activists and others. We are joined together by our concern for workers in Virginia.

**All:** We are outside a grocery store that does not provide regular paid sick days to its workers. If a worker gets the flu or a cold, they must choose between going into work sick or staying home and losing the day's pay.

**Leader:** We know that most grocery store workers count on each paycheck. Losing a day or two of pay is hard and so many will go to work sick.

**All:** And if a grocery worker's child is sick, the parent can't stay home to care for the child without risking losing pay.

**Leader:** There are 193 countries in the world and 179 of them have a paid sick day standard.

**All:** The United States is a real outlier in not providing this core protection to its workers.

**Leader:** There are now 15 states that require employers to provide paid sick days. We'd like to see Virginia become the 16<sup>th</sup>.

**All:** We call upon the General Assembly to create a paid sick day standard requiring all employers to allow workers to earn up to five paid sick days.

**Leader:** Five paid sick days is not too many. Despite some business claims that businesses will be crushed (and the sky will fall) if they must provide five paid sick days, studies have shown that such a standard is "no big deal," for employers. In fact, such a standard is good for employee morale and retention.

**All:** Most employers provide paid sick days, but some sectors do not routinely offer paid sick days. Two-thirds of Virginia's grocery store workers have no paid sick days.

**Leader:** Let's now hear from anyone in our group who either is now working or has worked without the guarantee of paid sick days.

**Testimonies:** *People in the group are invited to share their stories.*

**Leader:** Thank you for sharing your stories. The workers in this store and these stories are why we advocate a paid sick day standard in Virginia. We show our love for our neighbors by pushing for real improvements in their lives. As Rev Dr. Cornell West says,

**All:** "Justice is what love looks like in public."

**Leader:** And now, let's put that love into action. Take out your cellphone. (*Pause for folks to find their phones.*) Go to your browser and type in [www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action). Has everyone gotten to a petition on paid sick days? If not, help your neighbor find it. Now, put in your home address and the names of your Senator and Delegate should pop up. Check the two boxes and send the pre-crafted emails to them or edit as you'd like. (*Give people a bit of time to do this.*) Thank you for your advocacy.

**All:** We are happy to help make change in Virginia. We know that advocacy is a group endeavor. We cannot change legislators on our own, but together we can encourage them to learn more and represent our concerns in the General Assembly.

**Leader:** And now is time for us to amplify our message. Stay around for a few minutes and take pictures of yourself outside the store. Post on social media to **@vainterfaith** and **@vapaidicksdays**. Share why you are standing in front of a grocery store. Link to the petition and invite others to send emails to their legislators.

**All:** We can do that. And is there more?

**Leader:** Yes, invite your friends and family, fellow congregants, students or union brothers and sisters to learn more about the need for paid sick days. Visit [www.vapaidicksdays.org](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org) to learn more. And ask them to sign the petition. One email to a legislator is good. Ten is good. One hundred emails are better!

**All:** We will help share the word. We believe Virginia could pass a paid sick day standard in 2022. We believe it can happen.

**Leader:** Thank you for your belief, your love put into action and your commitment to advocacy. We can make a difference. Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for all you do to make the world and Virginia a better place. May God bless you.

*If people are interested and the location allows, they can stay around and help distribute more flyers to customers about supporting a paid sick day standard.*

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)

**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?** Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

[www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action](http://www.vapaid sick days.org/take-action)



**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?**

Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

**[www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action)**



**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?**

Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

**[www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action)**



**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?**

Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

**[www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action)**



**Did you know that the workers in this store have no paid sick days?**

Two-thirds of grocery store workers in Virginia, including workers in this store, have no paid sick days. If they or their children get the flu or a cold, they must decide whether to go to work or stay home and lose a day's pay.

Send your legislators an email urging them to pass a paid sick day standard that covers all workers in Virginia.

**[www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action](http://www.vapaidicksdays.org/take-action)**