

**STEVEN ASHBY TALK. PAID LEAVE ORDINANCE. MONDAY OCTOBER 30. CITY COUNCIL HEARING**

I would like to provide some global and historical context to our discussion today.

Norway has 25 weekdays paid vacation under federal law, so five weeks.

Denmark has 25 weekdays paid vacation.

New Zealand and Australia have 20 weekdays paid vacation.

Belgium and Germany have 20 weekdays paid vacation.

Every worker in every one of the 27 countries in the European Union gets at least 4 weeks Paid Time Off. That's in addition to paid sick days, and to paid holidays.

But in America, there is no federal law. In America, the richest country in the world. America is not broke. America can afford paid time off. If anyone tells you that "we can't afford to give our employees any time off," keep these facts in mind.

As well, the same answer applies for the number of federally mandated paid sick days, or the number of federally mandated paid maternity leave days. Zero.

Do you know who does get 5 weeks paid vacation a year in America? On average, it is those making six-figure salaries. The lower your wages, the less paid time off you receive.

The average in America is 2 weeks paid time off. But at least 28 million Americans get no time off.

When Congress won't act, when the filibuster stops legislation that helps working people, our cities and states step in to lead.

Chicago has led on the minimum wage, because Congress has not acted in almost 15 years.

Chicago has led on fair scheduling. Chicago has led on paid sick days.

Chicago has led on one fair wage for tipped workers. Chicago has led fighting wage theft, and fully funding the Office of Labor Standards to enforce these laws.

137 years ago, Chicago led in the fight for the 8 hour day, when working 12 hour days and 7 days a week were the norm for factory workers. Workers had no time to live. All they did was work.

"8 hours for work. 8 hours for sleep. And 8 hours for what we will." That was the slogan of the movement.

80,000 marched down Michigan Avenue chanting this slogan. That's the equivalent, with population growth, of over half a million marching today.

Today, this proposed ordinance stands on the shoulders of those workers in 1886. We are again declaring, workers deserve a life. They deserve to be happy.

"8 hours for what we will." Just as 137 years ago, workers fought for 8 hours to play with our kids, 8 hours to be with our families, 8 hours to go to the park, 8 hours to read a book, 8 hours to catch up on sleep. 8 hours to have a life.

So today we are fighting for Paid Days Off to play with our kids, to be with our families, to go to the state and national parks, to have a full life.

Rest and vacation reinvigorates you. It gives you something to look forward to. After vacation, you're ready to tackle the world again.

55 years ago in Memphis, African-American sanitation workers galvanized the nation when they went on strike and carried the sign, "I am a man." They were all male workers, but what the signs meant was "I am a human being."

They declared: I deserve respect. I deserve fair compensation, a living wage. I deserve time off to live my life.

Today we stand as well on the shoulders of those 1968 sanitation workers, declaring that workers have a right to be happy.

The Declaration of Independence in 1776 includes the words "the pursuit of happiness." The Founders said these words were "self-evident" and "unalienable Rights." That is, words that are obvious. Words that should be clear to all. Rights that cannot be taken away.

You cannot live a happy life if all you do is work, 52 weeks a year, your entire life. We all have a right to live a full life, a complete life, a happy life. We all deserve Personal Time Off to be with our families and friends.

We are saying today, Chicago must lead again on workers' rights. And then the nation will follow.