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that will require federal contractors to offer paid sick leave to its employees. This includes more than 300,000 employees who do not currently receive sick leave.

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President Barack Obama used Labor Day as the backdrop to sign an executive order that will require federal contractors to offer paid sick leave to its employees. This includes more than 300,000 employees who do not currently receive sick leave.

Although the White House wouldn't specify the cost to federal contractors to implement the executive order, which Obama was to address at a major union rally and breakfast in Boston. The Labor Department said any costs would be offset by

savings that contractors would see as a result of lower attrition rates and increased

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The Obama administration has been working on the executive order for months, and chose Labor Day to announce it as Obama works to enact what policies he can before his presidency ends despite resistance in Congress to laws he's proposed to improve workplace conditions. That push has reverberated in the 2016 campaign, where Democratic candidates are seeking to draw a distinction with Republicans on who's most supportive of the middle class.

"There are certain Republicans that said we can't afford to do this," said Labor Secretary Thomas Perez. He lamented how paid leave is seen as a partisan issue in the U.S. despite broad support in Europe. "The Republican Party is out of step with similar conservative governments around the world," he said.

Roughly 44 million private sector workers don't get paid sick leave — about 40 percent of the private-sector workforce, the White House said. In his speech to the Greater Boston Labor Council's breakfast, Obama was also to renew his call for Congress to expand the requirement beyond contract workers to all but the smallest U.S. businesses, an idea that has gained little traction on Capitol Hill.

The Labor Day gathering in Boston was attracting other well-known politicians, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh among them. Vice President Joe Biden, who is considering entering the Democratic presidential primary, was to echo the labor rights theme in a march with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka on Monday at a Labor Day parade in Pittsburgh.

Unable to push much of his agenda through a Republican-controlled Congress, Obama has in recent years used executive orders with frequency to apply policies to federal contractors that he lacks the authority to enact nationwide. His aim is to lay the groundwork for those policies to be expanded to all Americans. Earlier executive orders have barred federal contractors from discriminating against workers based on

their sexual orientation or gender identity, raised the minimum wage for contractors

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numbers difficult. Officials also declined to put a dollar figure on how much contractors would face in added compensation costs.

Cecilia Muniz, director of the White House's Domestic Policy Council, said the administration has an obligation to get the most out of every federal tax dollar.

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