

# Protests Planned for March 8 Not Reason to Deviate from Normal Attendance Policies

*SmithAmundsen Labor and Employment Alert*  
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The organizers of January's Women's March on Washington and similar "sister" marches across the country are calling for women to "take the day off from paid and unpaid labor" on March 8, 2017. Promoted as a "Day Without A Woman" and an "International Women's Strike," the protests are scheduled to coincide with International Woman's Day.

While we do not anticipate the level of participation to be on the scale of the January marches, employers will likely experience higher than normal employee absences and should plan accordingly. As a general rule:

- Have a backup plan to ensure necessary work gets done in the event you experience an abnormally high number of call-ins on March 8.
- Do not draw attention to the issue or address the protests in advance. Do not threaten or make generalized statements that could be construed to have a gender bias.
- Do not highlight the reason for the absence, question motives, or engage in debate about the propriety of engaging in this type of protest.
- Apply your standard attendance policies for call in and vacation request procedures. If a participating employee's absence would ordinarily result in an assessment of points or discipline, act accordingly. Similarly, if a request for time off would otherwise be granted, then it should be granted in this situation.
- Do not include terms or references such as, "protest," "strike," "boycott," or "women's march" when issuing disciplinary action or denying requests for time off pursuant to the terms of your standard attendance policy. Such references are unnecessary and could aggravate the situation.

In short, remain calm and follow standard operating procedures.

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Suzanne S. Newcomb  
Partner

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