



NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PAY EQUITY

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Washington, DC- Women throughout the United States will observe Equal Pay Day on Tuesday, April 20 with programs and rallies, in blogs and tweets, and by urging their senators to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act (S.182).

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This will be the 15th annual Equal Pay Day, a public awareness event originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity that symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned the previous year. The most recent Census Bureau statistics show women making 77 cents for every dollar men make, based on the median salaries of all full-time, year-round workers in the country. The wage gap is greater for most women of color: Latinas earn 58 cents and African American 68 cents for every dollar men make.

Passed by the House of Representatives in January 2009, the Paycheck Fairness Act would narrow the wage gap by strengthening and updating the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee held a hearing on the bill on March 11.

The Paycheck Fairness Act requires that employers have “bona fide” reasons other than sex for paying different wages to men and women doing the same work; allows for comparing employees within clearly defined geographical areas and not just in the same location; prohibits retaliation against workers who ask about wage practices or disclose their own wages; makes remedies for equal pay violations based on sex the same as those based on race or national origin; and increases training, education, research, and data collection.

“When the first Equal Pay Day was held in 1996, women earned 74 cents for every dollar earned by men. The wage gap has remained virtually unchanged this century, with women’s wages fluctuating between 76 and 78 per cent of men’s wages” according to Michele Leber, NCPE chair. “At this rate, it will be 2060 before the wage gap closes and women are paid equitably for the work they do, based on the skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions of the job – and not on who fills the job.”

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