

Equal Pay

NCJW Message:

NCJW endorses and resolves to work for employment laws, policies, and practices that provide equal pay and benefits for work of comparable worth and equal opportunities for advancement. NCJW has long supported equal pay, from working to pass the 1963 Equal Pay Act, to advocating for the 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, to supporting current legislation to secure equal pay for equal work. Lawmakers should pass the Paycheck Fairness Act (S 819/HR 1869), the Pay Equity for All Act, and similar legislation to combat pay discrimination and close the gender wage gap.

Talking Points

- **On average, women earn only 80 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men — a gap which is even wider for women of color.** For every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, African American women are paid 63 cents, Native American women are paid 58 cents, and Latinas are paid 54 cents. Women of color are more likely than white women to hold low-paying, hourly jobs, lead single-parent households, and experience substantial caregiving burdens, making pay inequality particularly devastating. If the gender wage gap was eliminated, women and families would be able to afford an additional 18 months of food, 15 months of child care, 14 months of college tuition, or 11 months of rent.
- **The wage gap cannot be fully explained by occupation, education, industry, or length of career.** The wage gap exists even when controlling for variations in the labor force. Women with advanced degrees are paid less than their male counterparts; women with master's degrees earn even less than men with bachelor's degrees. Further, all industries, such as manufacturing or healthcare, exhibit a wage gap. About 40 percent of the wage gap cannot be attributed to differences in occupation, time spent in the labor force, or education, meaning that it must be the result of gender discrimination. Women are familiar with this gap — less than a third of women believe they are paid the same salaries of their male counterparts.
- **Laws have been passed to promote equal pay, but further action is needed to close the wage gap.** In 1963, President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law, requiring men and women to be paid equally for equal work. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act became law in 2009, which made it easier for employees to seek legal action to remedy unequal pay. However, the wage gap has only narrowed by 21 cents since the Equal Pay Act was passed. Further measures to support equal pay must be passed, including protections for employees

who discuss compensation, prohibiting prospective employees from using past salary to determine future salary, and collecting pay data at the federal level by gender, race, and ethnicity to better identify pay discrimination. Absent additional laws to strengthen pay equality, equal pay for equal work will not be achieved until 2059.

- **Eliminating the wage gap is good for women, families, and the economy.** According to the Center for American Progress, the wage gap forces women to forego \$10,470 per year, or \$418,000 over the course of a lifetime (an amount which more than doubles for women of color). Women are the primary earners in half of families with children under 18, yet mothers earn only 70 cents — and single mothers only 55 cents — for every dollar paid to fathers. Closing the wage gap would ensure families have greater financial security, enabling them to better afford rent, groceries, or childcare. It would also boost our nation's economy, making up for \$840 billion lost annually in spending on goods and services.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the wage gap?

The term 'wage gap' refers to the difference in wage between two people performing the same job. The US Census Bureau collects data on the earnings of full-time, year-round working women and men. The data shows that on average, women earn only 80 cents for every dollar paid to men.

What is 'Equal Pay Day?'

'Equal Pay Day' marks the day when the average woman's earnings "catch up" to a man's earnings from the previous year, symbolizing how many more days she must work to gain the same compensation. In 2017, Equal Pay Day was observed on April 4. Many women of color wait longer for their Equal Pay Days; Equal Pay Days for African American women, Native American women, and Latinas are July 31, September 25, and November 2, respectively.

Did the Equal Pay Act of 1963 fix the wage gap?

No. The landmark civil rights law required that men and women be given equal pay for equal work in the same place of business, but pay inequality still exists. In fact, the wage gap has only narrowed by 21 cents since passage of the law.

What is the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act?

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was passed in 2009 to restore equal pay protections eroded by the 2007 US Supreme Court decision in Ledbetter v. Goodyear. This ruling limited the timeframe in which employees could file claims against employers for pay discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act expands the timeframe in which wage discrimination suits can be brought.

How does salary history impact the wage gap?

Allowing employers to use prior salaries — which may have been impacted by gender discrimination — to determine future salaries, enables pay discrimination to follow women over the course of their careers.

Is there legislation in Congress to promote equal pay?

Yes. The Paycheck Fairness Act (S 819/HR 1869) was introduced in the House by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and in the Senate by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA). The bill would deter wage discrimination by updating and strengthening the Equal Pay Act, bar retaliation against workers who disclose their own wages to co-workers, and prohibit employers from seeking a job applicant's salary history. The Pay Equity for All Act, introduced by Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) in the House, would prohibit employers from asking job applicants for their salary history before making a job or salary offer.

Have states enacted laws to address the wage gap?

Yes. All states but two — Alabama and Mississippi — have at least one law promoting equal pay, though the strength and type of these provisions vary. Massachusetts, California, and New York City recently passed laws prohibiting employers from asking job applicants about their salary histories.

Would enacting federal equal pay legislation hurt businesses?

No. State efforts to mandate equal pay have not placed an undue burden on small businesses, nor increased the cost of doing business. In fact, equal pay laws and policies can help businesses of all sizes attract and retain top talent. Current federal equal pay proposals would maintain the protections now provided to small businesses under the Equal Pay Act and update its remedies and protections using familiar principles and concepts from other civil rights laws.

Do voters support equal pay?

Yes. A survey in 2016 found that 89 percent of voters favor policies to combat pay discrimination, and 58 percent of women in the US view equal pay as one of most important workplace issues facing women. Further, according to a 2016 study by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, support for equal pay is bipartisan; among women, 70 percent of Republicans, 83 percent of independents, and 88 percent of Democrats would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports equal pay.

Do Jewish values support equal pay?

Jewish values teach us Kavod Ha'Briot — respect and dignity for all human beings. This means that regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other factor, everyone deserves fair treatment and equal opportunities in order to thrive.