

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR TOM HARKIN
INTRODUCING THE FAIR PAY ACT OF 2011
April 12, 2011**

MR. HARKIN: Mr. President, today Americans observe Equal Pay Day – the date that marks the extra days that women must work into 2011 in order to equal what men earned in 2010. On this day, I am proud to introduce the Fair Pay Act of 2011, a bill I have introduced every Congress since 1996.

In 1963, Congress enacted the Equal Pay Act to end unfair discrimination against women in the workforce. While we have made progress toward this important goal, nearly half a century later, too many women still do not get paid what men do for the same or nearly the same work. On average, a woman makes only 77 cents for every dollar that a man makes. That translates into an average of \$400,000 over her lifetime that a woman loses because of unequal pay practices. The circumstances are even worse for Latinas and women of color.

This is wrong, it is unjust, and it threatens the economic security of our families. The fact is millions of Americans are dependent on a woman's pay-check just to get by, to put food on the table, pay for child care, and deal with rising health care bills. Two-thirds of mothers bring home at least a quarter of their family's earnings. In many families, a woman is the sole breadwinner.

The evidence shows that discrimination accounts for much of the pay gap, and our laws have not done enough to prevent this discrimination from occurring. That is why passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was a critical first step, and why it is important to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, introduced today by Senator Milulski and Representative DeLauro, of which I am a proud original cosponsor. There are too many loopholes and barriers to effective enforcement of our existing laws. We need to strengthen penalties and give women the tools they need to confront discrimination.

At the same time, we must recognize that the problem of unequal pay goes beyond insidious discrimination. As a nation, we unjustly devalue jobs traditionally performed by women, even when they require comparable skills to jobs traditionally performed by men.

Today, millions of female-dominated jobs – for example, social workers, teachers, child care workers and nurses – are equivalent in skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions to similar jobs dominated by men. But, the female-dominated jobs pay significantly less. This is inexplicable. Why is a housekeeper worth less than a janitor? Why is a parking meter reader worth less than an electrical meter reader? Why is a social worker worth less than a probation officer?

To address this more subtle, deep-rooted discrimination, today I am joining with Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton to introduce the Fair Pay Act, which will ensure that employers provide equal pay for jobs that are equivalent in skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

This important legislation would also require employers to publicly disclose their job categories and their pay scales, without requiring specific information on individual employees. If we give women information about what their male colleagues are earning, they can negotiate a better deal for themselves in the workplace.

Right now, women who believe they are the victim of pay discrimination must file a lawsuit and endure a drawn-out legal discovery process to find out whether they make less than the man working beside them. With pay statistics readily available, this expensive process could be avoided.

The number of lawsuits would surely go down if employees could see up front whether they are being treated fairly. In fact, I once asked Lilly Ledbetter: if the Fair Pay Act had been law, would it have averted her wage discrimination case? She said that with the information about pay scales that the bill provides, she would have known that she was a victim of discrimination and could have tried to address the problem sooner, rather than suffering a lifelong drop in her earnings and a trip all the way to the Supreme Court to try to make things right.

On this Equal Pay Day, let us make sure that what happened to Lilly never happens again by recommitting to eliminate discrimination in the workplace and make equal pay for equal work a reality. America's working women and the families that rely on them deserve fairness on the job. Hopefully, soon, we can achieve true equality in the workplace so there is no need to commemorate equal pay day any more.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the *Record*.