

Lawyers' Committee Urges Support of Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 182)

September 20, 2010

Dear Senator:

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law stands in strong support of the Paycheck Fairness Act, and urge you to support cloture and passage of this legislation without **any** amendments that would stall or weaken the bill.

As an organization established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 to mobilize the private bar in the vigorous enforcement of the nation's civil rights laws, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law maintains an ongoing commitment to ensure justice and equality in employment for racial and ethnic minorities and other traditionally disenfranchised groups. While Congress has been actively engaged in creating solutions to the economic crisis our country is currently facing, women experience continuous discrimination in the workplace in regards to the compensation they receive for their work. It is because of this discrimination that women still lag far behind their male counterparts in performance-based compensation forty – seven years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

To date, full-time working women receive only 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. The disparities in pay for women are even more drastic when race is a factor. Full-time African American women are paid only 61 cents, and Latinas only 52 cents, for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. This disparity translates into a loss to American families of financial resources totaling \$10,622 a year or \$431,000 over a woman's lifetime. These statistics are inexcusable considering women represent one-half of the paid American workforce yet, there is not a single state where women have gained economic equality with men.

In the current economic climate, it is critical that the 9.9 million single mother households receive the financial resources they need to secure their families' economic security. Single parent households headed by women of color are extremely vulnerable in uncertain economic climates when would-be contributors are denied employment opportunities because of other barriers including criminal backgrounds and/or negative credit histories. Recent reports estimate that approximately 60 percent of employers use credit checks and approximately 92 percent use criminal histories to screen job applicants. These practices unquestionably contribute to the 16 and 13 percent unemployment rates among African Americans and Hispanics respectively. While the Lawyers' Committee developed our Access Campaign to deal with

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this type of discrimination in hiring, women who successfully obtain employment should not face the additional barrier of unequal pay. Children of color and those in low-income communities will undeniably be relegated to a life of poverty if the mothers who head their households are not afforded adequate pay for their work.

In order to rebuild the economy and provide economic stability for working families, Congress must ensure that all Americans are paid based on their qualifications and performance. Passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act will translate into tangible positive outcomes for families that rely on a woman's wage. With a \$10,622 increase in financial resources families headed by women can:

- Pay the average costs of utilities for a year with \$1,500 remaining or the average; mortgage and utilities for 11 months and 20 days;
- Feed a household of four for a year; or
- Pay for three years of health insurance premiums with over \$400 to spare.

The Paycheck Fairness Act will not only ensure that working women receive equal compensation for their labor but also decrease pay discrimination and retaliation claims. This legislation will allow women to inquire about co-worker wages without fear of reprisal, strengthen penalties for equal pay violations, and increase federal outreach and enforcement. Furthermore, we know that support for ending this type of discrimination is strong. Most Americans believe that women should receive equal pay for their labor. A nationwide poll of registered voters showed that 84% of American voters support improving our equal pay law. This is true regardless of gender or party affiliation with 87% of women, 81% of men, and 91% of Democrats, 77% of Republicans, and 87% of Independents supporting new legislation.

The Lawyers' Committee hopes that you will support this necessary equal pay legislation, which will provide a long overdue improvement to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and allow women to bring much-needed financial resources home to their families. Your constituents will thank you for your support of equal pay for all Americans. If the Lawyers' Committee can be of further assistance or for any questions, please feel free to contact me at (202) 662-8330 or via email at tclayhouse@lawyerscommittee.org.

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Sincerely,



Tanya Clay House
Director of Public Policy

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