

July 24, 2009

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, we are writing to urge you **to cosponsor the Paycheck Fairness Act, S. 182**. A companion bill to S. 182 was passed by the House of Representatives on January 9, 2009.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women who work full time earn, on average, only 78 cents for every dollar paid to men. The statistics are even worse for women of color. This continuing wage gap not only undermines the economic security of women and their families today, but it also directly affects women's retirement security down the road. Indeed, women and their families are particularly vulnerable during this economic downturn. In June 2009, unemployment among women was 7.6%, the highest rate in over 25 years; unemployment among women who maintain families was 11.7%, also a 25-year high. And women are far more likely to live in poverty than men; women who head families, Black and Hispanic women, and women over age 65 living alone are especially likely to be poor.

The Paycheck Fairness Act updates and strengthens the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to ensure that it will provide effective protection against sex-based pay discrimination. Unfortunately over the past 45 years, courts have interpreted the EPA in crabbed ways that run counter to Congressional intent and have made the law insufficient to remedy persistent wage disparities. For these reasons, it is critical that the Senate pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will bolster current laws against wage discrimination, require the federal government to be more proactive in preventing and battling wage disparities, and give women the tools they need to obtain equal pay for equal work. This comprehensive bill also provides for much needed training and technical assistance as well as data collection and research.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would take concrete steps to improve the economic security of working families. **We urge you to co-sponsor and work to swiftly pass the Paycheck Fairness Act** to better address wage discrimination and eliminate loopholes that have undermined the EPA's effectiveness.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Fatima Goss Graves, Senior Counsel, at the National Women's Law Center, (202) 588-5180 or fgroves@nwlc.org.

Sincerely,



Fatima Goss Graves
Senior Counsel



Marcia D. Greenberger
Co-President