

Senator Gillibrand, New York Women Leaders Demand Paycheck Fairness

Working Women Stand to Lose \$250,000 Over Course of Career, Families Can't Afford It

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New York - Highlighting an issue that is close to her heart, New York Senator Gillibrand today joined forces with leading voices for women in New York to demand Senate action on the *Paycheck Fairness Act*. As a member of the House of Representatives, Senator Gillibrand worked hard to pass this measure, however the Senate has yet to act on the legislation.

"I believe equal pay for women will result in economic growth for everyone," said Senator Gillibrand. "As we mark Women's History Month, I am proud to join with women leaders in New York to ensure equality and economic opportunity for women. I am working with Senate leaders to move forward on vital legislation that will guarantee equal pay for women and teach girls how to acquire better jobs that pays them what they're worth."

One of Senator Gillibrand's first actions in the U.S. Senate was to support passage of the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act* which allows more time for victims of pay discrimination to file a lawsuit. However, she is continuing her work to address the ongoing pay gap between men and women.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act*, introduced the past two Congresses by then-Senator Hillary Clinton, would take crucial steps to help empower women to negotiate for equal pay, create strong incentives for employers to obey the laws that are in place, and strengthen federal outreach and enforcement efforts.

"All of us, men and women, young boys and girls, pay a dramatic price when we do not grant equal opportunity to every hardworking woman in our economy," said Senator Gillibrand. "The evidence is absolutely crystal clear. When women earn more, their families succeed. When mothers earn their fair share, young children have greater access to quality health care, educational opportunities, and safe communities. By ending the wage gap we will help ensure that every child can achieve his or her God-given potential."

Even though the Equal Pay Act became law 45-years ago, pay discrimination remains in the workplace. A study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research showed that New York ranks 44th in the country for women's participation in the labor force - this suggests significant barriers to women entering the work force. Women only make 78 cents on the dollar compared to a man.

According to the National Committee on Pay Equity, working women stand to lose \$250,000 over the course of their career because of unequal pay practices. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the wage gap continues to persist even though women posted a greater net increase in jobs paying above the median salary than men from 2000 to 2005. In 2005, the median weekly pay for men was \$663 compared to 73 percent of that for women, who earned \$486 a week on average.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research and the AFL-CIO found that America's working families are lose \$200 billion annually as a result of the on-going gender wage gap, even when accounting for age, education, and hours worked. That means \$4,000 each year for each working woman's family. According to the same study, equal pay would drastically cut poverty rates for women and their families - for single mothers, poverty would be cut in half. The poverty rates of married working women would fall by more than 60 percent.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would address wage disparity by preventing, regulating and reducing pay discrimination for women. The legislation would create a training program to help women strengthen their negotiation skills, enforce equal pay laws for federal contractors and require the Department of Labor to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities by enhancing outreach and training efforts. In addition, the bill would prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers and allow women to sue for punitive damages in addition to compensatory damages now available under the Equal Pay Act.

Senator Gillibrand was joined today by representatives from National Organization for Women, Girls Inc., the Equal Pay Coalition, A Better Balance, AAUW, Catalyst, Center for the Women of New York, CUNY - Howard Samuels Center, Junior League of the City of New York, League of Professional Theatre Women NY, League of Women Voters of the City of New York, Legal Momentum, and Manhattan Chamber of Commerce-Women's Business Committee.

"As the organization whose mission is to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold, Girls Incorporated has been in the forefront of advocating for an equitable society for 145 years," says Joyce M. Roché, President and CEO of Girls Inc. "On behalf of the 900,000 girls we reach, we are proud to lend our voice to Senator Gillibrand's effort to bring the Paycheck Fairness Act to a hearing in front of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee of the Senate."

"The National Organization for Women-New York State is proud to stand with Senator Gillibrand, linking arms to urge the United States Senate to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. The Paycheck Fairness Act is next in the fight for fair pay. Since women tend to hurt "first and worst" during economic downturns, new legislation strengthening pay equity laws is needed now more than ever. An unprecedented number of women are now family breadwinners due to rising employment rates--making pay equity critical not simply to family economic security but also to the nation's economic recovery," said Marcia A. Pappas, President from the National Organization for Women-NYS.

"NYWA's Equal Pay Coalition NYC is inspired by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's enthusiastic leadership on the Paycheck Fairness Act which will help us advance the agenda toward achieving equal pay for women and minorities," said Beverly Neufeld, Vice President, New York Women's Agenda, Coordinator, EPCNYC. "As we approach the observance of Equal Pay Day in April, we look forward to working together to build the momentum to make fair pay a reality very soon for the women, children and families throughout New York and the United States."