



May 23, 2012

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

President Obama's signing of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act formed a strong foundation for pay equity in this country. Now that fair access to the courts has been restored, it is time to build on that foundation. On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of members of People For the American Way, we urge you to support and cosponsor the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1519/S. 797).

The *Ledbetter v. Goodyear* decision was a clear step backward for ending employment discrimination in the workplace, when the Supreme Court held that employees could not challenge ongoing compensation discrimination if the employer's original discriminatory decision occurred more than 180 days before filing of the claim. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was meant to correct this misinterpretation of the nation's civil rights laws. It reiterates Congress' intent to hold employers accountable for discrimination and allows employees a fair chance to fight back.

But they still need the tools to do so. The Paycheck Fairness Act strengthens the remedy, enforcement, and exception provisions of the existing Equal Pay Act. It engages the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Labor in a number of areas including technical assistance, data collection and review of existing data, and the provision of wage discrimination training to government employees and individuals seeking their assistance. It supports negotiation skills training for women and girls and general public awareness regarding the means available to eliminate pay discrimination.

The Paycheck Fairness Act sends a clear message: The wage gap is real. No employer should benefit from discriminating against employees like Lilly Ledbetter. Retaliating against employees who fight for equal pay is unacceptable. Pay equity should be the rule, not the exception. What the Paycheck Fairness Act does not do is also clear: It does not eviscerate employers' legal rights. It does not take away their right to set their own business practices or constrain them in terms of job applicants. It does not create unfair comparisons between jobs performed or where they're performed. It does not hurt small businesses, and it certainly does not negatively impact women.

In fact, the Paycheck Fairness Act is good for families who are facing daily struggles in this unsteady economy. The last thing they should be worrying about is whether the women who work so hard to support them are being treated fairly in the workplace. Americans know this to be true. According to a June 2010 National Partnership for Women and Families/Lake Research

Partners poll¹ regarding the Paycheck Fairness Act, 84% said they supported “a new law that would provide women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace.” 72% expressed strong support. This message resonated with men (81% support/69% strong) and women (87% support/74% strong) and among Democrats (91% support/83% strong), Republicans (77% support/61% strong), and Independents (87% support/70% strong). It also holds up among racial and ethnic groups and across geographic regions.

For these reasons and more, we strongly urge you to support and cosponsor the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Sincerely,



Marge Baker
Executive Vice President for Policy and Program



Jen Herrick
Senior Policy Analyst

¹ A press release announcing the poll results is available at http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=24776&security=2141&news_iv_ctrl=1741. Visit http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/5-2010_Poll_Data_One_Pager.pdf?docID=6681 for additional information.