

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Statement on the Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act

June 10, 2010

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed into law the Equal Pay Act, which sought to end wage discrimination on the basis of sex. At the time, women were paid 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. Forty-seven years later, pay parity remains far from reality, as women in the United States still only earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. For women of color, this gap is even wider. This remains unacceptable, as it was when the Act was signed. All women and their families deserve equal pay. Women now make up nearly half of the Nation's workforce, most homes have two working parents, and 60 percent of all women work full time. As we emerge from one of the worst recessions in American history, when families are struggling to pay their bills and save for the future, pay inequity only deepens that struggle and hampers our economy's ability to fully recover.

But we have taken some important steps to address this inequality. I am proud that the first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which restored the right to seek a remedy for women who, like the law's namesake, face wage discrimination during their careers. In my State of the Union Address, I pledged to crack down on violations of equal pay laws, and I've created the National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force, bringing together Federal agencies to improve the enforcement of equal pay laws. We've also increased funding for Federal agencies charged with enforcing equal pay laws and other civil rights statutes. The agencies themselves have taken steps to address disparities. For instance, the Department of Labor Women's Bureau is conducting research and analysis, providing technical assistance, and building partnerships to increase women's incomes, narrow the wage gap, and reduce income inequality. And the White House Council on Women and Girls is actively working to close the wage gap.

More needs to be done. I appreciate the House acting on the Paycheck Fairness Act early last year, and I renew my call to the Senate to modernize and strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes, providing incentives for compliance, and barring certain types of retaliation against workers by employers. On this anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, let us all renew and redouble our efforts.

Categories: Statements by the President : Equal Pay Act of 1963, 47th anniversary.

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