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HARTFORD – Friday, June 10, marks the 48th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy’s signing into law the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The bill was aimed at eliminating the disparity between the wages of male and female workers. Since that time, the gap between women’s and men’s earnings has closed at an infinitesimal rate. In 1963, women in America made, on average, 59 cents for every dollar earned by a similarly qualified man. Today, women earn about 76 cents. Black women and Latinas earn considerably less.

Therefore, the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) calls upon Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which builds upon the 1963 legislation, and was reintroduced this year by Connecticut’s Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-3rd) and U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland). In the last Congress, the Paycheck Fairness Act passed the House of Representatives but failed to pass the Senate by two votes. It was reintroduced in both the House and the Senate this year, but no major action has been taken.

“It is unacceptable that forty-eight years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, which was supposed to ensure all Americans receive equal pay for equal work, women in this country still earn only 77 cents on the dollar as compared to men,” said Congresswoman DeLauro. “That is why I have proposed the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would enforce and strengthen the Equal Pay Act. I will keep fighting to see this bill passed into law, and to ensure that woman get the respect and compensation they deserve.”

Provisions of the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1519, S.797) are:

- Clarifies the “any factor other than sex” defense so an employer trying to justify paying a man more than a woman for the same job must show the disparity is not sex-based; is job related and is necessary for the business;
- Prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who discuss or disclose salary information with their co-workers;
- Strengthens the remedies available to include punitive and compensatory damages. Under the EPA currently, plaintiffs can only recover back pay or, in some cases, double back pay. The bill would ensure that women can receive the same remedies for pay discrimination that are available under other laws for discrimination based on race and national origin;

- Requires the Department of Labor to improve outreach and training efforts to work with employers in order to eliminate pay disparities;
- Enhances the collection of information on women's and men's wages in order to more fully explore the reasons for the wage gap and help employers in addressing pay disparities; and
- Creates a new grant program to help strengthen the negotiation skills of girls and women.

“What’s significant about the Paycheck Fairness Act is that it really puts teeth into the original law,” said Teresa C. Younger, executive director of the PCSW. “It removes any ambiguity, holds employers accountable and has provisions for training and employee protections.”

About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state's women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women's issues.