

Connecticut General Assembly



PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

News Release

18-20 Trinity St., Hartford, CT 06106 • 860/240-8300 • pcsw@cga.ct.gov • www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/

CONTACT: Christine Palm, Communications Director at 860/240-8449; or 860/836-2145

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PCSW Marks Pay Equity Day April 20th

Sends Virtual Mock Lost Wages Invoice

HARTFORD – To mark National Pay Equity Day on Tuesday, April 20, the Connecticut General Assembly's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) is calling for increased awareness of the discriminatory pay practices that continue to exist despite last year's passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Currently, the wage gap means that women make, on average, just 78 cents for every dollar a similarly qualified man earns for the same work. Over time, such pay inequity can have disastrous effects on a woman's economic security.

PCSW Executive Director Teresa C. Younger said the wage gap affects not only women, but their families, especially as women currently bring home about 44% of total family income in dual income-earner families and more women are emerging as the family's primary breadwinner, according to the Families and Work Institute.

"A few key factors contribute to the wage gap," Younger said. "Women often do not have the skills needed to negotiate for the salary they deserve, and even more damning, there is still a culture of secrecy about wages, so that, just as in Lilly Ledbetter's case, women often do not realize they're being paid less than male co-workers. Finally, and quite significantly, in our society women are still not valued for all they add to the economy and the workplace, so there's a societal acceptance of pay inequity."

According to the National Committee on Pay Equity, over women's working lives, the wage gap robs a high school graduate, a college graduate and a professional school graduate an estimated \$700,000, \$1.2 million and \$2 million, respectively.

Perhaps most surprising, the pay gap exists even in female-dominated fields and across all professional strata: in elementary education, where women make up 82 percent of the workforce, male teachers earn 10 percent more. The same is true in nursing, where 90 percent of the workforce is female. And women in high-paying professions suffer from wage discrimination, too: female physicians earn a 41% less than their male counterparts, female lawyers earn 23% less than males, and college professors earn at least 21% less than their male colleagues (and are far less likely to make tenure).

When President John F. Kennedy signed the original Fair Pay Act in 1963, women made 59 cents on the dollar. This means the wage gap closes by less than one cent per year, and is so dramatic that a woman would have to work 15 years longer than a man earn the same amount. This explains why Pay Equity Day is always on a Tuesday in April; it symbolizes how far into the year a woman must work, on average, to catch up to

what a man made the previous year, and Tuesday is the day her wages catch up to a man's from the previous week.

“Despite incremental progress over the years, the ripple effects of the wage gap are just as damning as they were in the 1960s -- and not in spite of -- but precisely because of -- today's distressed labor environment,” said PCSW Executive Director Teresa C. Younger. “If we are truly to expand the middle class and pull the country out of the hole it's in, we must begin by paying women what they're worth.”

The PCSW is also joined by the State's Constitutional officers in calling attention to the wage gap. Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said, “Pay disparity between men and women -- despite some progress -- remains shockingly common. Wage inequity causes severe and lasting economic hardship and sends a message of disregard and disrespect. The fight for pay parity is yet another reason to preserve the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women as a relentless, tenacious advocate.”

State Comptroller Nancy Wyman joined the PCSW in noting the importance of National Pay Equity Day. “We need to keep fighting for equal pay not only to support our families today, but so we can retire on the same footing as a man,” Wyman said. “About half of all women are in jobs that do not offer retirement plans, which is a major reason why women make up the majority of older adults living in poverty. And a lifetime of earning less pay means a retirement with less security for a woman and her family.”

According to Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, “Women have made great strides as leaders in the worlds of business, politics and in community settings. Yet in America in 2010 it is appalling that on average women earn only 78 cents for every dollar earned by men. We know the gap is much larger for women of color. I look forward to the day when we no longer need to mark this occasion. Until that day arrives, however, we must all work tirelessly to end the fundamental inequity that exists for women in the workplace and hold employers accountable for pay and promotion discrimination.”

“Paying women less than they rightfully have earned is bad business practice,” said State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier. “Responsible companies pay their employees equitably not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is good for the bottom line.”

The PCSW is marking Pay Equity Day with a mock invoice showing accumulated lost wages. (PDF attached.) The PCSW is also making available a “Got Equality?” public awareness campaign including paycheck inserts to State of Connecticut employees, a curriculum guide for schools, draft language to help towns and municipalities pass a Pay Equity Resolution, and “Got Equality?” buttons, which are available free to interested groups or organizations by calling the PCSW at 860/240-8300.

Facts on the wage gap:

- The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which President Barack Obama signed into law last year, only restores provisions the U.S. Supreme Court rolled back under the Bush Administration;
- African American women earn just 70 cents for every dollar earned by men and that figure drops to 62 cents for Latinas;
- In Connecticut, the median annual earnings of women with a four-year degree or more is \$55,000, as compared with \$77,000 for men, according to the American Association of University Women.
- The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the number of working women at 76 million by 2014.

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 “all matters concerning women, and in furtherance of that responsibility shall: (a) inform leaders of business, education, State and local governments and the communications media of the nature and scope of the problem of sex discrimination, with a view to enlisting their support in working toward improvement; (b) serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with services for women; (c) promote consideration of qualified women for all levels of government positions; (d) oversee coordination and assess programs and practices in all State agencies as they affect women.”