



Wider Opportunities for Women

For Immediate Release
June 10, 2010

Contact: Susan Rees
srees@wowonline.org
202-464-1596

The U.S. Senate Should Celebrate Equal Pay Day by Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act

Forty-seven years ago today, on June 10, 1963, President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law. This landmark civil rights law made it illegal for employers to pay women less than men for the same work. Nevertheless, today women make only 77 cents for every dollar that men earn.

By passing the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 182), the United States Senate will make good on the country's promise to women nearly 50 years ago. The Paycheck Fairness Act strengthens the Equal Pay Act by putting it on a similar legal footing to civil rights laws adopted after 1963. It will also enable women to negotiate for equal pay and prohibit employer retaliation for disclosing one's pay rate to co-workers. There are over 40 co-sponsors of the Paycheck Fairness Act in the Senate, and the House passed the measure in early 2009.

"Women's ability to be economically secure as family breadwinners, as well as in retirement, will be tremendously enhanced with passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act," said Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). "Retirement security is drastically affected by pay discrimination during a woman's working years."

When women are paid less, both employee and employer contributions to Social Security and 401(k) retirement plans are lower because they are based on a percentage of an employee's income. Over a lifetime, the difference in pay between men and women accumulates to \$431,000. In 2008, the average Social Security retirement benefit for women was 24 percent lower than it was for men.

In 2007, more than half of single, retired women age 65 and over had incomes below \$15,758, the national [Elder Economic Security Standard Index](#) (Elder Index) for homeowners without mortgages. The Elder Index is a measure developed by WOW and by the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Boston to show the income needed by elders and couples age 65 and over to afford basic necessities, including food, shelter, transportation, taxes and out-of-pocket medical costs. WOW also works with state partners to develop a similar [Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard](#) for working families.

The average monthly Social Security benefit for retired white men over age 70 is \$1,486.50, which is 26% higher than the benefit for white women over 70, 63% higher than the benefit for black women over 70 and 55% higher than the benefit for women of "other" race and ethnicities.

A [new poll of registered voters](#) found that 84% support "a new law that would provide women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace." Participants were told the "law will also make it harder for employers to justify paying different wages for the same work, and ensure that businesses that break the law compensate women fairly."

###

Founded in 1964, one year after enactment of the Equal Pay Act, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) works nationally and in its home community of Washington, DC, to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and their families at all stages of life. For over 45 years, WOW has been a leader in the areas of nontraditional employment, job training and education, welfare to work and workforce development policy.