

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Press Office, 202-226-0853

Chairwoman Woolsey Statement at Subcommittee Hearing On “The Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1338)”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey(D-CA), chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, for a subcommittee hearing on “The Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1338)”*

Thank you all for coming today for this hearing on H.R. 1338, the Paycheck Fairness Act, sponsored by Representative Rose DeLauro of Connecticut.

Representative DeLauro first introduced this bill some ten years ago and has been introducing it ever since.

I am proud to be one of over 200 co-sponsors of this legislation, which strengthens the existing Equal Pay Act to ensure that women make equal pay for equal work.

This is important because in the 43 years since passage of the Equal Pay Act, women still make less than a man.

In April, the Full Education and Labor Committee held a hearing on equal pay and our witnesses confirmed this.

Although most women are in the labor force — including 70 percent of all mothers — on average they earn only 77 percent of what their male counterparts make.

This translates into lost income of anywhere from \$400,000 to \$2 million over a lifetime of work.

This gap exists at the beginning of a woman’s career and grows even wider over time.

Dr. Catherine Hill from the Association of American University of Women was one of our witnesses at the April hearing, and she testified about a recently published study conducted by the AAUW.

What this study found was that one year out of college, women make only 80 percent of what men make, and that the gap exists in every career field and in every occupation.

The study also found that 10 years later, a woman makes only 69 percent of a man’s salary.

This study looked at a full range of other factors that could explain this difference between men and women 10 years down the road and discovered that a full 12 percent of the gap was attributable to wage discrimination

This wage gap is grossly unfair to women and affects not only their weekly pay check but also their prospects at retirement.

Older women are less likely than older men to receive pension income, and when they do, they only receive one-half the benefits that men do.

The median income for an older woman is about \$15,000 compared to \$29,000 for an older man.

And 70 percent of older adults living in poverty are women.

Lilly Ledbetter, who recently testified before the Full Committee concerning her case — *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire* — knows that all too well.

She worked as a supervisor at Goodyear Tires for 19 years, and now that she is retired, her unequal pay is reflected in her pension and Social Security income.

The Supreme Court did not find in Lily Ledbetter's favor; instead the Court favored a very narrow interpretation of Title VII's statute of limitations and barred her claim.

But the Full Committee recently approved the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which undoes this decision and will help others in Ledbetter's situation.

But Lily Ledbetter will have to live into retirement with the Supreme Court's erroneous decision.

But not only is unequal pay bad for women, it is bad for their families as well.

Currently, the average woman's paycheck makes up about one-third of a family's total income.

And for many families, having a working wife can make the difference between being in the middle class or being poor.

This is also very true for single women who are the heads of their households

They are twice as likely to be in poverty as single dads.

The goal of the Equal Pay Act — to eliminate pay disparities for women — is a laudable goal.

However it has never lived up to its full promise.

H.R. 1338, the Paycheck Fairness Act does just that.

It imposes a stricter burden on an employer who wishes to affirmatively defend its actions by citing non-gender reasons for the difference in pay between a man and a woman.

It expands the remedies for victims of pay discrimination beyond backpay to compensatory and punitive damages.

It prohibits employer retaliation if workers share salary information with each other.

It improves the collection of pay information.

And it creates a grant program for the establishment of negotiation skills training programs for women and girls.

There is so much that we need to do to make the workplace a friendly place for women and their families.

And equal pay is crucial.

We have a very distinguished panel of witnesses today who will elaborate on this very important bill, and I look forward to their testimony.

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