



NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PAY EQUITY

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July 22, 2008

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor Committee
The Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member, House Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20516

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon:

On behalf of the National Committee on Pay Equity—a coalition of women's and civil rights organizations; labor unions; religious, professional, legal, and educational associations, and individuals—I urge you to take expeditious action on the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1338) and to reject any amendments that would weaken the bill.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is a welcome update to the Equal Pay Act, passed 45 years ago. The bill would provide helpful clarification by requiring employers to show that wage gaps stem from reasons other than sex. The legislation also seeks to proactively deter pay discrimination by strengthening penalties for such violations and by prohibiting retaliation against workers who ask about their employers' wage practices or disclose their own wages, which might have helped Lilly Ledbetter. NCPE is particularly pleased that the bill would ensure that women can seek the same damages as people who face discrimination because of race or national origin.

NCPE also is glad to see that the Paycheck Fairness Act would require the Department of Labor to reinstate activities that promote equal pay, such as providing technical assistance to employers, recognizing businesses that address the wage gap, collecting wage-related data, and conducting and promoting research about pay disparities between men and women.

Women currently make, on average, only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. This wage gap, which has scarcely changed this century, is not simply a result of women's education levels or life choices. The wage gap—which is even greater for most women of color—not only impacts the economic security of women and their families today, it also directly affects women's retirement security.

It is time for additional proactive measures to effectively address wage discrimination and to eliminate loopholes that have hindered the effectiveness of the Equal Pay Act. NCPE members look forward to your committee action to bring the Paycheck Fairness Act to the floor with no weakening amendments.

Sincerely,

Michele Leber, Chair
National Committee on Pay Equity

cc: Members, House Education and Labor Committee