

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On
“Strengthening the Middle Class: Ensuring Equal Pay for Women”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee for a committee hearing on “Strengthening the Middle Class: Ensuring Equal Pay for Women.”*

Since the signing of the Equal Pay Act over forty years ago, tremendous progress has been made by women in the workplace. Women are leaders in business, government and academia. For the first time in history, a woman is serving as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Yet despite the progress that women have made, they continue to be held back by wage discrimination.

Today is National Equal Pay Day. Each year, Equal Pay Day signifies the number of days into a new year that women have to work before earning what men earned by December 31. It is appropriate that we hold this hearing today to examine the issue of gender pay inequality in this country and consider the impact that wage discrimination has not only on women, but on families, communities and the nation as a whole.

This issue is one of basic fairness. Women should receive equal pay for equal work. Yet research clearly demonstrates that women are earning less than men for equal work. Yesterday, the Association of American University Women unveiled its study on the pay of college graduates.

We will hear from one of today’s witnesses, Dr. Catherine Hill, about this study in more detail. But I want to note its key conclusions: one year out of college, women earn approximately 80 percent of what men earn. Ten years out of college, women fall even farther behind, earning only 69 percent as much as men earn.

This disparity in wages exists across all occupations as well as educational levels. In 2005, the median weekly wages earned by women physicians were just 61 percent of the median weekly wages of their male colleagues. Women in sales related occupations earn only about 63 percent of the median weekly wages of men in equivalent positions.

Disparate pay also means women are less likely to have retirement security. Even when women have pensions, the earning difference between women and their male colleagues leads to large gender gaps in pension amounts.

This Committee has spent a considerable amount of time in the early months of the 110th Congress examining the status of America's middle class and pursuing policies to strengthen the middle class.

Compared to a generation ago, families have lost 13.5 weeks of full-time work to the U.S. economy. But while families put in more hours at work than their parents did, their inflation-adjusted incomes are only minimally higher. In fact, when one adjusts for the additional hours worked, median living standards are actually lower. Nearly two-thirds of parents say they do not have enough time with their children and nearly half of all employees with families report conflicts between their job and their family.

On average, women's wages constitute more than one-third of their families' income. Paying women an equal salary for equal work is an immediate means to make these families more secure.

More than 3.5 million single-mother families live in poverty. Because of pay inequality, single mothers are twice as likely to live below the federal poverty line as single fathers. Equal pay would serve as an important antidote to this poverty.

Gender pay discrimination clearly has far reaching implications for America's economy and middle class. That's why this hearing today is so important.

I want to thank Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro for her tireless advocacy on this issue and thank her for appearing before the Committee today. I look forward to hearing her testimony about her legislation – the *Paycheck Fairness Act* – which I am proud to co-sponsor.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act* would expand the *Equal Pay Act* and would take affirmative steps to eliminate gender-based wage discrimination by enhancing enforcement and increasing training, research, education and outreach.

I also want to welcome and thank Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton for appearing before the Committee this morning. As the first woman chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Congresswoman Norton has substantial knowledge and experience with the issue of wage discrimination.

I look forward to hearing the testimonies of our second panel of witnesses and I want to thank them for being with us today. With that I will yield to my colleague, the Committee's Ranking Member, Mr. McKeon.

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