



Working FOR Women

**YOUR JOB ★
YOUR RIGHTS**

Increasing Employment Opportunities and
Improving Working Conditions for Women

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In 1963, the Equal Pay Act was signed, requiring that men and women in the same workplace be given equal pay for substantially equal work. A year later, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was enacted, prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Although great progress has been made over the past several decades, there is still a long way to go to achieve equality for women in the workplace. Many families are increasingly dependent on two incomes, while many other families depend solely on women's paychecks. However, women still hold a majority of low-wage jobs. A pay gap between men and women still exists despite the fact that more women are in the workforce today than ever before. For the first time in history, women now make up almost half of the labor force.

President Barack Obama demonstrated his commitment to equal pay when he signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which reversed a Supreme Court decision that made it difficult for women to bring pay discrimination cases, and has advocated for passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act, a comprehensive bill that strengthens the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which made it illegal for employers to pay unequal wages to men and women who perform substantially equal work.

Under the leadership of Secretary Hilda L. Solis, the U.S. Department of Labor has renewed its commitment not only to equal pay, but also to workplace flexibility, worker protection, paid leave, retirement security, veterans' services, and employment opportunities for all women. Acting on this commitment, the Department has launched a variety of initiatives to advance the Administration's goal of improving working conditions and increasing employment opportunities for women and their families.

Working Together – White House National Equal Pay Task Force: By coordinating the efforts of the Department of Labor, Department of Justice, Office of Personnel Management, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Administration is ensuring strategic enforcement of pay discrimination cases. This coordination should help to reduce the persistent pay gap between men and women by increasing enforcement, improving data collection, educating employees and

employers concerning their legal rights and obligations, and ensuring that the federal government conducts itself as a model employer.

Enforcing Equal Opportunity and Pay: The Department is devoting significant enforcement resources to investigating and correcting instances of individual and systemic pay discrimination, ensuring that the doors of opportunity are open for all American workers. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) enforces Executive Order 11246, which mandates equal opportunity in employment by federal contractors and subcontractors. OFCCP has hired new compliance officers to increase its ability to investigate and resolve cases and has prioritized compensation cases for enforcement. OFCCP also continues to investigate cases of systematic discrimination against women in the other employment practices, including hiring and promotion. Through innovative rulemaking, OFCCP is considering comments received in response to an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on how to develop a compensation data collection tool. Along with the Women's Bureau (WB), OFCCP has also launched new public education efforts so that working women and their employers understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. Recently the WB published *A Guide to Women's Equal Pay Rights* that helps working women combat pay inequities and *An Employer's Guide to Equal Pay* that assist employers in ensuring that they are complying with the law.

Innovating – the Equal Pay App Challenge: The Department of Labor, as part of the Equal Pay Task Force, invited software developers to educate users about the pay gap and build tools to promote equal pay by creating applications that use publicly available labor data and other online resources. In April, 2012 four winners of this challenge were announced. This challenge represents just one more way that the Administration is empowering women with the tools they need to make sure they get equal pay for equal work.

Protecting Women in the Workforce: The Department's Wage and Hour Division has stepped up its enforcement efforts in high-risk industries such as healthcare, restaurants, and garment, which employ large populations of vulnerable workers—many of whom are women—and where the division has found significant and widespread labor violations. Since 2009, the Division recovered nearly \$169 million in back wages for approximately 270,000

workers in approximately 31,500 cases nationwide in low-wage industries, including industries in which women are likely to work. In addition, the Department's Civil Rights Center conducts compliance reviews of and processes complaints alleging discrimination and/or violations of equal opportunity requirements by: recipients of financial assistance under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), One-Stop partners listed in WIA Section 121(b) that offer programs or activities through the One-Stop system, and any other recipients of financial assistance from DOL.

Keeping Women Workers Safe at the Worksite:

KIn 2011, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) launched an outreach initiative to protect hair salon workers from possible formaldehyde exposure (a toxic chemical that is also a carcinogen) due to the use of hair smoothing products in salons. In the spring of 2012, the agency unveiled its new safety and health topics webpage and new publication covering the hazards to workers in nail salons including chemical, ergonomic, and infectious disease related hazards. OSHA is also responding to the continued high rate of injuries among healthcare workers by launching in 2012 a National Emphasis Program on Nursing Home and Residential Care Facilities, which will increase OSHA inspections of these facilities. In addition, OSHA also focuses resources on women workers in non-traditional industries—such as construction. OSHA created a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health to focus specifically on safety and health issues that women are experiencing on construction job sites.

Minimum Wage and Overtime Protections for In-Home Care Workers: In December 2011, the Wage and Hour Division published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would provide minimum wage and overtime protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act for nearly two million workers who provide in-home care services for the elderly and infirm. Of the approximately two million workers who are affected by this proposal, more than 92 percent are women.

Work-life Balance and Workplace Flexibility: As more American families become two-income families, and as the wage earners in those families find themselves working longer hours, the need for family-friendly labor policies has never been greater. That is why the Administration endorsed the Healthy Families Act to provide

workers with sick leave to take care of themselves or their families. The Wage and Hour Division published a Request for Information on implementing the break time requirement for nursing mothers contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. The Department clarified the definition of “in loco parentis” under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to ensure that an employee who assumes the role of caring for a child receives parental rights to family leave regardless of his or her legal or biological relationship to the child. These improvements will make it easier for women in the workplace to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. The Department has also hosted several dialogues around the country on workplace flexibility. In addition to these forums, the Women's Bureau and the Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) hosted a roundtable on workplace flexibility for people with disabilities in January of 2011.

Employment and Training Services for Women: The public workforce investment system provides important employment, educational and training services to help individuals, including women, find good jobs and move along a career pathway. Approximately 48 percent of the participants in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs in the most recent fiscal year, ending September 30, 2011, were women. Similarly, approximately 55 percent of the individuals in the WIA youth program were female. The Adult and Dislocated Worker Program also provides employment and training services to displaced homemakers as defined in the WIA.

Trainning Women for Jobs in a Clean Energy Economy: Since Earth Day 2009, Secretary Solis has demonstrated her commitment to ensuring that women receive training that enables them to secure good jobs in a competitive global economy. To achieve this objective, the Department's “Pathways Out of Poverty” initiative provides \$150 million in job training grants to help women and other under-served populations attain economic self-sufficiency. A number of these grantees have succeeded in recruiting women participants (23 percent on average as of September 2010), while focusing on sectors which have historically employed fewer women, such as construction, energy, and transportation. The Women's Bureau hosted a series of teleconferences to better connect women with green jobs training and employment and released *Why Green Is Your Color—A Woman's Guide to a Sustainable Career*.

Strengthening the Safety Net for the Unemployed: The Recovery Act provided incentives for states to update antiquated unemployment laws to make unemployment assistance available to more American workers, including part-time workers who are disproportionately women. Efforts by the Administration have resulted in unemployment benefits being extended. As a result of the modernization efforts in the Recovery Act, an estimated 200,000 unemployed Americans received benefits they would not otherwise have received.

Increasing Women's Retirement Security: The Department's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) educates women about retirement to help them increase their financial fitness and exercise their rights under the law. Most recently, EBSA partnered with the National Network to End Domestic Violence for two free webcasts to provide retirement savings education. EBSA has also recently launched a series of public forums around the country to increase awareness about saving for retirement and managing retirement savings and has a number of resources available on its website to help women address the many challenges they face when saving for retirement.

Supporting Women Veterans and Their Families: Women who have recently been discharged from our Armed Forces face unique challenges—challenges that too often lead to unemployment and homelessness. As a result of listening sessions about the reintegration challenges face by women veterans held by the Women's Bureau, the Women's Bureau released the online publication, *Trauma-Informed Care for Women Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: A Guide for Service Providers*. This guide will equip service providers with a deeper understanding of the unique experiences and needs of women veterans. In 2010, the Women's Bureau partnered with the Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to award grants totaling more than \$5 million to aid homeless female veterans and veterans with families access job training, counseling and placement services. The Women's Bureau has also hosted "Stand Down" for women veterans in Kansas City, Missouri, Long Beach, California, San Antonio, Texas, and Tampa Bay, Florida. These community-based interventions bring together in one location all the services that homeless veterans may need, making them more easily accessible to potential beneficiaries.

To learn more about how the Department is working for women, please visit www.dol.gov or call 1-866-487-2365.

