



What is Equal Pay Day?

Background

Every year in April, Business and Professional Women's Foundation (BPW Foundation) recognizes a national day of action promoting fair pay known as **Equal Pay Day**. Equal Pay Day is celebrated in April because April symbolizes the month when women's wages catch up to men's wages from the previous year. Equal Pay Day 2011 will be held on Tuesday April, 12th.

On Equal Pay Day, BPW Foundation members and working women advocates around the country mobilize their communities by holding press conferences, signing proclamations, hosting events, and meeting with policymakers to push for stronger state and federal equal pay laws.

Gender Wage Disparity Continues

According to Census statistics released in September, 2010 women working, full-time, year round make, on average, 77 cents for every dollar a male earns. An alternative to the wage gap, which is measuring the ratio between women's and men's median weekly earnings for full-time workers, was 80.2 percent in 2009 which is flat since the historical high of 81.0 percent in 2005¹.

Median earnings for women of color are consistently lower. In 2009, in comparison to the earnings of white men, African American women earned 67.5 percent, Asian American women earned 90 percent, and Hispanic women earned 57.7 percent².

Over a lifetime of work this loss adds up into a shockingly high career wage gap. The career gap lowers women's earnings over a lifetime and reduces their long-term assets and that of their families. The typical woman loses \$431,000 in pay over a 40-year career³.

Wage disparity persists **across all educational levels and in all states.** Women with the most education lose the most in earnings. Women with a college degree or higher lose \$713,000 over a 40-year period versus a \$270,000 loss for women who did not finish high school⁴.

Equal Pay Public Policy

In 2009, the **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act** was signed into law, which amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stating that the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new discriminatory paycheck.

Now we must pass **The Paycheck Fairness Act**, which will strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes and improving the laws effectiveness. Congress came close to passing the Paycheck Fairness Act in the 111th Congress however it unfortunately failed in the Senate by a very small margin in December, 2010.

For more information, please contact BPW Foundation at policy@bpwfoundation.org.

¹ <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/C350.pdf>

² <http://www.pay-equity.org/index.html><http://www.pay-equity.org/index.html>

³ http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/04/equal_pay.html

⁴ http://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/2008/pdf/equal_pay.pdf