



Sample Equal Pay Day Op Ed 2011

Today, *Tuesday, April 12*, is the national observance of Equal Pay Day - the point in the year when a woman's wages catch up to a man's wages in the previous year. According to latest US Census statistics on average, full-time working women earned 77 cents to every dollar earned by men. It's hard to believe that in 2011 when women make up half of the workforce they earn 23% less than their male counterparts.

(If your state does better than the national average) Here in *(your state)*, workingwomen do a little better than the national average. We are paid about *(your state figure which you can get from the Institute for Women's Policy Research at www.iwpr.org)* on the dollar compared to men. That's hardly a cause for celebration, over a lifetime of work these lost wages adds up. On average, women lose out on \$9,575 per year and \$434,000 in a lifetime due to the wage gap.

(If your state does worse than the national average.) It's shameful, but here in *(your state)* women's pay doesn't even measure up to the national average. We are paid just *(your state percentage)* of men's pay. Women and our families are being shortchanged thousands of dollars a year and hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of a lifetime.

There were 68 million women in the workforce in 2008, a significant increase from 18.4 million in 1950. Women are projected to be 50 percent of the labor force by 2010.¹ With more women in the workforce, and more families reliant upon women's paychecks for their livelihood, the U.S must address the wage gap for the sake of American families and their financial stability.

BPW Foundation believes in the three pronged approach to addressing the issue of pay equity. We believe that legislation should be passed to enact tougher laws; businesses should be held accountable for their unfair pay practices and mindful of what they pay their employees; and women should be given the knowledge and tools to empower themselves to achieve pay equity at work through negotiation and advancement.

Federal legislation is a viable way to address the persistent gap between men's and women's wages. The Paycheck Fairness Act will strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes and strengthening penalties to guarantee that women workers are not shortchanged solely because of their gender. The bill would create stronger incentives for employers to follow the law as well as increase penalties for violations, strengthen federal outreach education and enforcement efforts and prohibit retaliation against workers who ask about employers' wage practices.

Unfortunately the 111th Congress was not able to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, however it came very close. We must see this bill passed in the current Congress because legislation that strengthens the Equal Pay Act is still needed.

Businesses of all sizes and industries have found that it makes good financial sense to pay men and women equally to attract and retain the best talent. To help employers be more mindful about their pay scales, BPW Foundation has developed an Employer Equity Self-Audit that encourages employers to recognize and reward the skills and contributions of working women. The audit assists employers in analyzing their own wage-setting policies and establishing consistent and fair pay practices for all. To get a copy please visit www.bpwfoundation.org.

With more women in the workforce and acting as their family's breadwinners, it's more important than ever in this economic downturn that we are all mindful of the wage gap and adequately address it through policy, business practice and as women, our own negotiation efforts.

(Your name) is the *(title, organization name, or occupation)*.

¹ <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-08.htm>