



Making the Mission Matter:

## AAUW at Work on Equal Pay

By Lisa Maatz and Catherine Hill

*AAUW's highly successful advocacy work in support of pay equity is a shining example of how our research, public policy, and grassroots efforts can make a difference in women's lives. But much remains to be done in this important area. What can you do to help?*

Equal Pay Day 2007 exemplified the new spirit at AAUW, showcasing our renewed commitment to collaborative programming. Smart public policy, solid research, and creative grassroots activities proved to be a winning recipe for the release of AAUW's new research report, *Behind the Pay Gap*. The report provides compelling evidence that the gender pay gap is real and is not simply the result of women's choices. *Behind the Pay Gap* demonstrates that just one year after college graduation, women earn only 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn. Ten years after graduation, women fall further behind, earning only 69 percent of what men earn. Even after controlling for hours, occupation, parenthood, field of study, and other factors known to affect

earnings, the research indicates that one-quarter of the pay gap remains unexplained—suggesting that sex discrimination remains a problem for women in the workplace.

Yet even powerful facts don't always speak for themselves. In this article, we tell the story of how AAUW member leaders and staff put the issue of pay equity back into the limelight, in the news, on campus, in state houses, and in Congress. Together with activities by our coalition partners (and a little bit of good timing and luck), we made Equal Pay Day 2007 one for the record books. From the morning talk shows to the halls of Congress, AAUW was the talk of the town, proving once again the power of women speaking with one voice.

### AAUW in Congress

On April 24, Equal Pay Day, the House Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing entitled "Strengthening the Middle Class: Ensuring Equal



Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY) with AAUW Director of Research Catherine Hill at the hearing

Pay for Women.” AAUW Educational Foundation Director of Research Catherine Hill testified about *Behind the Pay Gap* at the hearing. (You can read Hill’s testimony at [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org).)

After the hearing, AAUW joined coalition partners on the lawn of the Capitol for an Equal Pay Day rally. Speakers included AAUW Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Lisa Maatz, as well as Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), sponsors of the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 766/H.R. 1338), and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), sponsors of the Fair Pay Act (H.R. 2019/S. 1087). The Paycheck Fairness Act—which, thanks to AAUW, has 226 cosponsors—closes loopholes in the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The Fair Pay Act would require employers to provide equal pay for jobs that are comparable but not identical. AAUW strongly sup-



AAUW Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Lisa Maatz speaking at Capitol Hill rally

ports both bills. AAUW also worked with these members of Congress to ensure that every House and Senate office got a copy of *Behind the Pay Gap*.

### AAUW at the State House

Meanwhile, AAUW member leaders were hard at work in their states. Coordinating a national and state media release takes finesse, care, and trust, but AAUW state theme team members were up to the challenge. Building on a shared commitment to AAUW’s mission, staff and member leaders struck a balance. States pursued independent activities but



Community members adversely affected by wage inequity participate as panelists at an AAUW Equal Pay Day event in Boston, Massachusetts

kept their eye on the national goal. AAUW staff compiled a map of state-based data and made it available to state leaders, along with an overview of upcoming research. When Equal Pay Day arrived, AAUW state leaders had the latest research findings in their hands, a press release template, and other resources. Events took place in state legislatures, on college campuses, and at AAUW branches. AAUW member leaders and staff referred journalists back and forth, and many articles included both a local and a national voice.

### AAUW on Campus

The 2007 Campus Action Projects included 11 college student groups working with AAUW branches on pay equity. Chosen from over 90 applicants, the teams produced events, mentoring programs, contests, and other programs to draw young women’s attention to the “bottom line.” For example, the team from Tennessee Technological University created a nontraditional mentoring center and organized a nontraditional student

“Transitions” conference, building on an established AAUW program model. The AAUW New York City Branch teamed up with students from the College of Staten Island to help undergraduate students mentor girls housed at a facility run by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. AAUW of Georgia joined forces with students from the Savannah College of Art and Design on a statewide art competition and film festival called “The Art of Equality.” They received 15 entries, and more than 250 people attended the exhibit.

### AAUW in the Media

All this hard work paid off with a whirlwind of media attention, coordinated by the AAUW communications department, that enabled AAUW to reach an estimated audience of 70 million people. With the release of *Behind the Pay Gap*, AAUW even achieved a media “trifecta” of coverage by all three national morning news shows—*The Today Show* (NBC), *Good Morning America* (ABC), and *The Early Show* (CBS). Other television coverage included many local affiliates of the CBS, NBC, ABC, and FOX television networks, as well as major cable outlets such as CNN. Print coverage included *Time Magazine*, *Newsday*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *BusinessWeek*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and many local newspapers. Radio coverage included ABC, CBS, Bloomberg, and National Public Radio.

Radio proved to be an especially powerful medium for national-local cooperation. Conducted by phone,



Allyson Ross’s first-place entry in the “Art of Equality” competition at the Savannah College of Art and Design



Lilly Ledbetter speaking to the AAUW Buffalo (NY) Branch

with AAUW research and advocacy efforts helps members and the community at large appreciate the value of AAUW's work.

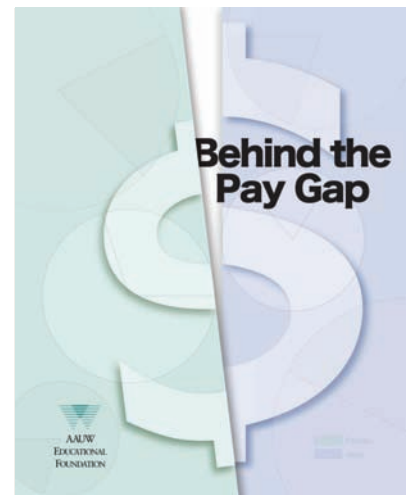
### Behind the Pay Gap Builds on AAUW History

These advocacy efforts were successful because the work builds on AAUW's history and reputation. AAUW's long and distinguished record of supporting pay equity dates back to the release of its first report on the subject in 1913. AAUW supported the first federal legislative proposal for pay equity in 1955. Over the next 50 years, AAUW advocated for fair pay and equity issues, playing a leadership role in the passage of landmark legislation including the Equal Pay Act, Title IX, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the College Cost Reduction Act. *Behind the Pay Gap* presents new evidence for the position that AAUW has long held—pay equity remains a real concern for women in every occupation and at every level of educational attainment.

radio interviews are an inexpensive way for staff and member leaders to work together. Local AAUW activities can be promoted in the context of national research and policy activities. On one show, a lively discussion on pay equity ended with a promotion for the local Eleanor Roosevelt Fund book sale. Connecting fundraising events

### The Work Continues

Opportunities to get in on the action are far from over. This winter, AAUW is encouraging the Senate to pass the Fair Pay Restoration Act (S. 1843), companion legislation to the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (H.R. 2831), which passed the House (225-199) on July 31 after intense advocacy by AAUW members nationwide. By reaffirming the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission standard, the bill will restore the law to the way it was applied before the U.S. Supreme Court's wrongheaded decision in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear* and ensure that victims of pay discrimination have their day in court.



AAUW's newest research report

## Make an Impact

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**Contribute \$100** or more to the Eleanor Roosevelt Fund and receive the 2007 collectors' pin to wear with pride.

Your donation supports research such as *Tech Savvy*, *Under the Microscope*, *Tenure Denied*, *Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus*, and *Behind the Pay Gap*.

[www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org)

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Your tax-deductible contribution helps provide a better future for women and girls.

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### Equal Pay Day 2008

The date for next year's Equal Pay Day has been set for Tuesday, April 22. It's never too early to start planning and building on all the great things AAUW and its grassroots advocates did this year to commemorate the day and advance the issue. States and branches can continue to build on the momentum generated by the release of *Behind the Pay Gap* by implementing some of the great ideas for action in AAUW's Pay Equity Resource Kit, available at [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org).

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