

85 Organizations Oppose the Workplace Advancement Act (S. 345)

March 30, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, **we write to express our opposition to the Workplace Advancement Act (S. 345)**. This inadequate bill suggests that there is just one solution to address the gender pay gap: a very weak non-retaliation provision that is so narrowly drawn it would do more harm than good. In addition, the bill includes a sense of the Congress that recommitments to the legal principles previously passed in the Equal Pay Act of 1963, a law that requires strengthening to make meaningful strides in closing the gender pay gap.

It is encouraging to see bipartisan recognition of the gender pay gap, but this bill is insufficient to tackle all aspects of this persistent problem. The Workplace Advancement Act's assertion that current law is good enough is naive at best and disingenuous at worst. Further, its non-retaliation provision does not adequately address the problem it seeks to remedy. In theory, this bill would prohibit employers from retaliating against employees for discussing their salaries – but *only* when the employees know and use certain magic words to initiate any discussions about pay. Otherwise, employees risk losing access to even the weak protections offered by the Workplace Advancement Act. This bill ignores the realities of today's workplace conversations about fair pay, and could even give women a damaging false sense of security in the face of such weak protections.

Fortunately, there is a powerful alternative to the Workplace Advancement Act. The Paycheck Fairness Act thoroughly addresses non-retaliation protections while making a host of other overdue revisions to the Equal Pay Act of 1963. This first-ever update would bring the law in line with other civil rights statutes that are already well known to employers. The Paycheck Fairness Act would strengthen the Equal Pay Act by closing loopholes and improving the law's effectiveness. The Paycheck Fairness Act would make it harder for employers to hide pay discrimination, reward employers that have good pay practices, help train women and girls in salary negotiation, and prohibit prior salary from dictating future pay. In so doing, the Paycheck Fairness Act creates meaningful incentives for employers to follow the law. **The Paycheck Fairness Act provides authentic, comprehensive solutions to the problem of pay inequality; the Workplace Advancement Act does not.**

You've heard the common statistic that women who work full-time, year-round typically make just 80 cents on the male dollar; it's even worse for moms and women of color. The gender pay gap is a real problem that deserves a comprehensive solution. While we applaud the legislative interest in this issue from both sides of the aisle, we also believe that working families need more than a recommitment to an outdated law that is too weak to help women in today's workplace. It is time to take real action, and that requires legislation that does more than pay lip service to a real problem that undermines the economic security of millions of women and their families.

The undersigned organizations urge you to oppose the Workplace Advancement Act (S. 345). We further urge you to take real action to close the gender pay gap by supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

9to5, National Association of Working Women

9to5 California

9to5 Colorado

9to5 Georgia

9to5 Wisconsin

A Better Balance

African American Ministers In Action

African American Ministers Leadership Council/PFAW

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation Teachers

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)

Atlanta Women for Equality

Bucks County Women’s Advocacy Coalition

California Women’s Law Center

Champion Women

Chicago Women in Trades

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Communications Workers of America

CREDO

Dialogue on Diversity

Disciples Justice Action Network

Equal Pay Today!

Equal Rights Advocates

Family Values @ Work

Federally Employed Women (FEW)

Federally Employed Women's Legal and Education Fund

Feminist Majority

Gender Justice

Girls Inc.

Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

International Union, United Auto Workers

Jewish Women International (JWI)

Jobs With Justice

Keystone Progress

Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)

Lambda Legal

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Legal Aid at Work

Legal Momentum

Main Street Alliance

Make it Work

Maryland Women’s Heritage Center

MomsRising.org

NAACP

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Committee on Pay Equity
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
National Women's Political Caucus
PathWays PA
People For the American Way
PowHer New York
Pride at Work
ROC United
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
SiX Action
Southwest Women's Law Center
UltraViolet
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network
U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce
United Steelworkers
UniteWomen.org
The Voter Participation Center
Women Employed
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement
Women's Law Project
Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund