



Support the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 84)

April 4, 2014

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to **support the Paycheck Fairness Act (S.84)**. The Act has a strong history of support, having twice passed the U.S. House of Representatives with bipartisan majorities in prior Congresses and falling just two votes shy of a Senate cloture vote in the 111th Congress. Additionally, the Act was voted on by both the House and Senate during the 112th Congress. **The same bill has been introduced in this Congress.** The measure provides a much-needed, first-ever update to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, bringing the law's principles and practices in line with the nation's other civil rights laws.

The Paycheck Fairness Act takes meaningful steps to create incentives for employers to follow the law, empower women to negotiate for equal pay, and strengthen federal outreach and enforcement efforts. The bill would also deter discrimination by strengthening penalties for equal pay violations and prohibiting retaliation against workers who inquire about employers' wage practices or disclose their own wages.

The recovery of the American middle class begins and ends with good-paying jobs, but that cannot happen if women continue to earn less than they deserve. In our research, AAUW drilled beyond the now infamous 77 percent wage gap statistic. We found that women only one year out of college, working full time, were paid on average just 82 percent of what their male counterparts were paid. After controlling for hours worked, occupation, college major, employment sector, and other factors associated with pay, this gap shrinks but does not disappear. In fact, about one-third of the pay gap cannot be explained by these factors commonly understood to affect earnings.¹ College-educated women still earn on average 7 percent less than men just one year out of college – even when they have the same major and occupation as their male counterparts.²

There is no higher priority for the American public than rebuilding the economy and creating jobs, and working towards pay equity is a critical step in that direction. In fact, **84 percent of voters support “a new law that would provide women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace.”**³ Pay equity is not just a moral issue; it is an economic imperative for women, working families, communities, and the nation's recovery. Recent research⁴ has found that four in ten households with children include a mother who is either the sole or primary earner for her family. Pay equity is the key to families making ends meet. In this economic climate, Congress cannot ignore such a critical issue.

Without the Paycheck Fairness Act, women will continue to be silenced in the workplace—prohibited from talking about wages with coworkers without the fear of being fired. This

forced silence keeps women—like it kept Lilly Ledbetter—from discovering pay discrimination against them. The fear of being fired is strong enough to keep employees from even broaching the subject, especially in this economy.

Once again, I urge you to **support the Paycheck Fairness Act (S.84)**. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 113th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-785-7720, or Erin Prangley, associate director of government relations, at 202-785-7730, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Vice President, Government Relations

¹ AAUW. (2012). *Graduating to a Pay Gap*. Retrieved January 25, 2013, from www.aauw.org/GraduatetoaPayGap/upload/AAUWGraduatingtoaPayGapReport.pdf

² Ibid.

³ Paycheck Fairness Act Coalition. (June 9, 2010). *New Polling Data Shows Voters Overwhelmingly Support the Paycheck Fairness Act*. www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/5-2010_Poll_Data_One_Pager_LL_2_.pdf?docID=6681

⁴ *The New York Times*. (May 29, 2013). *U.S. Women on the Rise as Family Breadwinner*. Retrieved March 28, 2014, from www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/business/economy/women-as-family-breadwinner-on-the-rise-study-says.html?_r=1&gwh=F1BC78FA3C98CB6D3D9FE993F83F87AF&gwt=pay