



## **FACT SHEET: Closing the Gender Wage Gap**

When America first put the Equal Pay Act on the books in 1963, women earned 59 cents for every dollar paid to men. Today, almost 50 years after the Equal Pay Act became law, women are paid an average of 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. The gender wage gap has narrowed, but it has not disappeared and has been virtually flat over the past decade.

In almost two-thirds of families led by single mothers or two parents, mothers are either the primary or co-breadwinner. In two-parent families, with the wage gap and the loss of jobs traditionally held by men in this economy, reliance on a woman's income in their family budget is even greater. This is a reminder that achieving equal pay for equal work isn't just a women's issue, it's a family issue.

- The wage gap affects all women and is larger among minority women and women with disabilities.
- The pay gap cannot be fully explained by a set of measurable variables – when controlling for factors such as experience, education, industry, and hours, among others, the wage gap still persists to a large extent. Over the course of her lifetime this gap will cost a woman and her family lost wages, reduced pensions and reduced Social Security benefits. American families are relying now, more than ever, on the wages of women. Lower pay for women not only means less economic security for women but also for the families that depend on them, during their years in the workplace and in retirement.

President Obama is committed to achieving equal pay for women. The Administration has taken critical steps to ensure equal pay for women and plans to further build on these measures to help women achieve pay parity:

- **Defending equal pay and reversing a Supreme Court ruling.** The first bill President Obama signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. The Act restores the interpretation of the law that a pay discrimination claim accrues whenever pay discrimination affects an employee. The Act reverses the Supreme Court's decision that held that people subject to pay discrimination have only 180 days from the date the employer first decides to pay them less to file a discrimination claim and reinstates the long-standing interpretation of the law that treats each paycheck as a separate discriminatory act that starts a new clock.
- **Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.** The President believes there are steps we should take to prevent unequal pay from happening in the first place. That's why the Administration was so disappointed when an important bill to give women more power to stop pay disparities – the Paycheck Fairness Act – was blocked by just two votes in the Senate, after it had already passed the House. The President is committed to keeping up the fight to pass the reforms in the Paycheck Fairness Act – commonsense legislation that updates and strengthens the Equal Pay Act. The Act would close the loopholes in the Equal Pay Act that give employers

unjustified defenses to their discriminatory conduct, strengthen retaliation prohibitions, and ensure that women receive the same remedies under the Equal Pay Act as are available to people subjected to wage discrimination on other bases.

- **Establishment of the National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force.** The Equal Pay Task Force brings together the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor and the Office of Personnel Management to address specific challenges preventing women from receiving equal pay for equal work. These recommendations call for new levels of interagency coordination and communication and will result in improved enforcement of equal pay laws and a workforce better educated on its right to equal pay and employers better educated on how to provide it.