

Extension of Remarks
Representative Jan Schakowsky
National Equal Pay Day
April 12, 2011

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today, in recognition of Equal Pay Day – a day which symbolizes the financial struggles that women must endure because of the ever-present wage gap.

There is no denying that a pay gap exists today. When comparing the wages of women and men who have the same job, qualifications, education and backgrounds, men win.

Last month, the White House released the first comprehensive federal report on women since 1963. The report, *Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being*, focused on five critical areas: people, families and income; education; employment; health; and crime and violence.

The report demonstrates that while women contribute a growing share of the family income across all family types and comprise nearly half of today's workforce, they are at a clear disadvantage in the workplace. This disadvantage exists at all levels, regardless of education

and occupation. Women today earn only about 75 percent of what men earn. Women of color fare worse. African American women earn 71 cents and Hispanic women earn only 62 cents.

In the 110th Congress, the first bill passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that Lilly Ledbetter waited too long to sue her employer for pay discrimination, despite the fact that the discrimination was ongoing and that she filed a charge with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as soon as she found out about the pay discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act restored the law as it was prior to the Supreme Court's decision by clarifying that each paycheck resulting from a discriminatory pay decision would constitute a new violation of employment nondiscrimination law, and therefore, restart the clock for filing a claim.

That was a victory but more must be done. The 112th Congress needs to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, legislation championed by my good friend Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, which would end the pay disparity between working men and women. The Paycheck Fairness Act would improve wages for women and families by making common sense changes to strengthen the Equal Pay Act. For example, to make the Equal Pay Act a more effective tool in ending gender-based pay discrimination, the Paycheck Fairness Act would clarify that an employer trying to justify paying a man more than a woman, for the same job, must show that the inequity is not sex-based but is job-related. The Paycheck Fairness Act would also bring the equal pay law into line with all other civil rights law by strengthening the available remedies to include punitive and compensatory damages.

We must eliminate inequities in the workplace. When our daughters and granddaughters enter the workforce, we must make sure that they earn the same as our sons and grandsons. It is only fair.