



Re: Equal Pay Today! Platform – Response Requested

Dear Governor:

Today, advocates across the nation marked the 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 with the launch of the **Equal Pay Today! Campaign** to close the gender wage gap that persists in nearly every industry and profession in the country. This gap varies by state and city, by education level and occupation, and is magnified for African American and Hispanic women.

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign has developed a Five-Point Equal Pay Platform, attached hereto, which calls for action to reform federal and state laws and enforce laws that are already on the books to address employment practices that contribute to the gender wage gap, including women not being paid the same for equal work, the segregation of jobs that blocks women from high-paying male-dominated occupations and depresses wages for women-dominated jobs. The Equal Pay Today! Platform also addresses pay reductions due to pregnancy and caregiving responsibilities, retaliation against workers for discussing their salaries, and the wage theft and the lack of a livable minimum wage that leave women without the wages they need to support themselves and their families. The Equal Pay Today! Campaign is a national state-based effort led by national and state-based organizations from around the country dedicated to ensuring equal pay for women. Those organizations signed below represent hundreds of thousands of women and their families living and working in every state in the country.

On this 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, we call upon all 50 Governors across the country to join our effort to close the gender wage gap. We appreciate that both the size of the wage gap and laws addressing this problem differ among the states. Some states need improvements in their equal pay laws while other states already have strong fair pay laws but need more vigorous enforcement of state and federal law. Some states may have already enacted laws to address some of the problems identified in the Equal Pay Platform, while other areas of the law may need major improvements. In every state, however, the wage gap exists and will remain stagnant unless a serious effort is made to address the many workplace barriers that leave women shortchanged.

- We therefore ask that you commit to work in your state to close the wage gap. As a first step: We ask that you join other governors across the country to acknowledge the

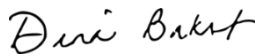
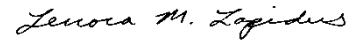
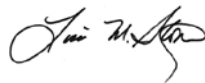
gender pay gap that exists and the importance of closing this gap so that women receive the equal pay that is so critical to the support of their families.

- We also ask you to join governors across the country in pledging to assess your state's equal pay laws and/or practices, work with your state legislators to enact new laws where necessary and with your executive branch agencies to ensure enforcement of the laws that do exist, and join with women's rights and local community groups to close the gender pay gap once and for all.

On August 26, 2013, the anniversary of the Equal Rights Amendment, often referred to as national Women's Equality Day, the Equal Pay Today! Campaign will announce the progress made by Governors in every state. You are in a position to lead efforts within your state and beyond your state's borders that could bring an end to decades of sex discrimination and finally realize the promise of the Equal Pay Act. We look forward to working with you to achieve this critical goal and to help you take the critical steps necessary to end the wage gap once and for all. See Platform and Letters to All Fifty Governors at www.equalrights.org/Equal-Pay-Today.

Please send your public acknowledgement of the importance of women receiving equal pay, along with any other comments or questions or action plans to Equal Pay Today! Campaign Member Noreen Farrell (Executive Director of Equal Rights Advocates) at nfarrell@equalrights.org or (415) 575-2398 or any member of the Campaign listed below. We look forward to your partnership and leadership on this important issue impacting so many women and their families in your state.

Sincerely,



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EQUAL PAY TODAY! PLATFORM

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign, launched on the 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act by national and state-based women's rights organizations, calls for an end to the gender wage gap that persists in nearly every industry and profession in the country. This gap varies by state and city, by education level and occupation, and is magnified for African American and Hispanic women.

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign includes: A Better Balance, American Association of University Women, American Civil Liberties Union Women's Rights Project, California Women's Law Center, Equal Rights Advocates, Gender Justice, Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center, Legal Momentum, Legal Voice, National Center for Law and Economic Justice, National Partnership for Women and Families, National Women's Law Center, Southwest Women's Law Center, Women Employed, and Women's Law Project. We join together to call for action to end the practices and close the loopholes in existing laws that contribute to women making on average only 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. These practices include:

- **Less pay for the same job:** Women are paid less than men in nearly every occupation. One study examining wage gaps within occupations found that out of 265 major occupations, men's median salary exceeded women's in all but one. Economists have documented the role of gender bias in employment decisions through studies that show women were offered fewer job opportunities and lower pay, even when they had identical resumes as men. To close the wage gap, we must address discrimination in pay and promotions on the same job.
- **Job segregation:** Sex role stereotypes lead to women being segregated into female-dominated jobs such as retail sales, home health care, and child care. These jobs pay low wages and are often part-time. Today, women make up nearly 2/3 of the adult minimum wage workforce and the minimum wage is too low. Jobs considered to be "women's work" typically pay less than male-dominated jobs requiring equivalent skill and effort, and women remain under-represented in higher paying work traditionally done by men, such as construction, fire-fighting and policing.
- **Retaliation against workers for discussing their pay:** Today, a majority of employees report that they are either prohibited or actively discouraged from discussing their pay. Employers with policies preventing employees from sharing pay information keep women in the dark about pay differences, limiting their ability to negotiate for higher pay and to enforce their rights under the equal pay laws.
- **Pay reductions due to pregnancy and caregiving responsibilities.** Employers pay women less from the moment of hire and deny them promotions because they automatically presume women will have children and then will commit less time and dedication to their jobs. If women do get pregnant or take on caregiving responsibilities, they sometimes lose income because of overt discrimination based on these stereotypes. They also lose pay when they are deprived of opportunities to advance to higher paid jobs or are pushed out of work altogether because employers do not accommodate needs that may arise for women as a result of pregnancy and caregiving, including through paid family leave or paid sick days, and flexible, predictable, and stable schedules. The result is that women experience diminished income throughout their working lives.
- **Wage theft:** Being paid less than the minimum wage, being shorted hours, being forced to work off the clock, not being paid overtime, and not being paid at all are pervasive practices across many industries. Women, especially immigrant women in low-wage jobs, are often the hardest hit by wage theft. According to a survey of low-wage workers in America's three largest cities (Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City), women were significantly more likely than men to experience minimum wage violations, and 47% of the undocumented women workers surveyed reported wage violations by their employer. Employers who fail to pay women workers the wages owed to them deny these women the fair pay they need to support themselves and their families.

For full version with citations, see http://www.womenslawproject.org/campaigns/Equal_Pay_Today_Campaign_Platform.pdf