The Paycheck Fairness Act

Would Give Women in Illinois More Power to Stop Pay Disparities

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At a time when families across America are struggling to make ends meet, equal pay for equal work isn't just a women's issue. It's a family issue. The Paycheck Fairness Act would address the gender pay gap by helping women successfully fight for the equal pay they earn. Democrats are working to pass The Paycheck Fairness Act, and are hopeful that Republicans will reverse their opposition to equal pay and help Democrats increase economic opportunities for the middle class.

Women in Illinois earn 78 cents for every dollar paid to men. According to the Joint Economic Committee, women in Illinois, on average, earn almost 78 cents for every dollar paid to men. Over their lifetime, these women will earn $480,000 less than their male counterparts. This pay gap has harmed the families of roughly 2,801,000 women in the Illinois workforce, especially as the workforce participation rate of women has risen. [Joint Economic Committee, 5/9/12; Census Bureau; Center for American Progress, 4/10]

Many women in Illinois are their families' primary wage earners. Today, women make up 47 percent of the state workforce and 37 percent of married employed mothers in Illinois are their families' primary wage earners. The burden of wage discrimination weighs heavily on the 1,989,753 Illinois children in households dependent on their mothers' earning. As the main breadwinners, women are asked to carry a greater economic load while making less than they deserve. [Joint Economic Committee, 5/9/12; Census Bureau; Joint Economic Committee; 5/22/12]

Illinois families depend on working women's wages for support. On average, mothers in Illinois contribute to 42 percent of their family's earnings. Closing the gender pay gap would strengthen the finances of these families, and the state economy. [Joint Economic Committee, 5/9/12]

Women in Illinois earn less across all occupations and educational levels. Research clearly demonstrates that regardless of occupation, education, industry, marital status, and other factors, pay for women lags behind their male counterparts. Women's median earnings are less than men's median earnings in 264 of 265 major occupation categories, including the following occupations in Illinois: [Bloomberg, 3/16/12; Census Bureau, report generated 5/21/12]

- Management, business and financial, earning 72% of their male counterparts' salaries;
- Computer, engineering, and science, earning 80% of their male counterparts' salaries;
- Sales, earning 41% of their male counterparts' salaries.

Eliminating the pay gap will make Illinois families more secure. The wage gap can prohibit working women from fully providing for their families. If the wage gap were eliminated, working women in Illinois would have additional earnings to purchase: [National Partnership for Women and Families, 4/12]

- 108 more weeks of food;
- 7 more months of mortgage payments; or
- 3,148 additional gallons of gas.