



For Immediate Release

Date: July 17, 2008

CONTACT: Nkenge Harmon, Steering, (202) 224-8994
Melissa Schwartz, Mikulski, (202) 228-1122
Sharon McGill, Stabenow, (202) 224-1437
Alex Glass, Murray, (202) 224-2834
Adrienne Marsh, McCaskill, (202) 224-6154
Linden Zakula, Klobuchar, (202) 224-2159
Clinton Press Office, (202) 224-2300

CONGRESSIONAL WOMEN RALLY FOR FAIR PAY *CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE DEMANDS EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK*

Washington, DC— *Today, Senate & House Democratic women, with guest Lilly Ledbetter, called upon Congress to pass fair pay legislation. The event was another in a series surrounding the Checklist for Change. Learn more about the Checklist at www.democrats.senate.gov/checklistforchange.* With the Capitol as the backdrop, Senate Democratic women held a bicameral rally featuring the first issue on their Checklist for Change. One month from the day the Checklist was launched, Democrats gathered with hundreds of women & men from across the country to express their commitment to ensure equal pay for working people without regard to gender. The legislators highlighted the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act* and the *Paycheck Fairness Act* pending in Congress.

"Today we stand as the united Democratic Women of Congress to demand equal pay for equal work for women across the country. We are here to give the nation a wake-up call! Wage discrimination still exists because there are loopholes in our federal laws. We want to close the loopholes," said Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Dean of the Senate Women. She continued, "Change in the federal law books means change in women's checkbooks. We need to pass the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act* and the *Paycheck Fairness Act*. It's time for a new American revolution - we need to put on our lipstick, square our shoulders and fight together!"

"In Michigan, the average woman with a college education earns over \$20,000 less per year than her male counterpart," said Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). "It is time that we take serious action so that employers who discriminate aren't allowed to continue because of a legal technicality."

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) said, "Even though women are doing the same jobs as men and working just as hard every day, they still aren't equal on one important day – pay day. And as a mother and grandmother, I want my children to live in a country where my daughter can earn just as much as my son. Lilly Ledbetter has turned the discrimination she suffered into a battle cry for justice and we stand with her to call for passage of equal pay legislation and a change of mindset in Congress."

“It’s my hope that my two daughters will never feel the discrimination that Lilly Ledbetter has experienced in her life. Equal pay for equal work is the very least we can pass on to the next generation of American women,” Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) said.

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) said, “It is a sad reality that still, 88 years after the 19th Amendment gave women equal voting power, and 45 years after the passage of the *Equal Pay Act*, that it takes women 16 months to earn what men can earn in 12 months. With Lilly’s courageous leadership, we can pass this law and we can start to give women those four months back -- those extra months it takes them to catch up with their male colleagues.”

"Women who get up every single day and go to work deserve to be paid the same as their male counterparts. That’s all Lilly Ledbetter wanted, that’s what every woman deserves, and that’s our mission today," said Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY).

Ms. Ledbetter, plaintiff in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.*, said, “Goodyear may never have to pay me what it cheated me out of, in fact, I will not see a cent from my case. But if this bill passes, I’ll have an even richer reward because I’ll know our daughters and granddaughters will get a better deal. That’s what makes this fight worth fighting and it’s what makes this fight one we have to win. Because when we win, it’ll make a big difference in the real world.”

Ms. Ledbetter worked as a supervisor for a Goodyear Tire plant in Gadsden, Alabama. After nearly two decades, an anonymous note revealed that for years she had been paid less than male coworkers that held the same job. She learned that she was being paid less than all her male counterparts in the department, including recent hires with less job experience. Not only did Goodyear pay her less at each pay check but her pension and retirement benefits are smaller because of the discrimination.

Ms. Ledbetter brought a claim against Goodyear for the discrimination she suffered. A jury awarded her back pay and damages of over \$3 million but in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Ms. Ledbetter could not collect any of the money Goodyear had cheated her of. The *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act* would overturn that decision, which held that employees only have 180 days to challenge a discriminatory decision about their pay even if the discriminatory wage continues year after year.

Democrats understand the Court’s ruling creates an untenable disadvantage for American workers. It ignores that reality of the workplace where co-workers generally do not know each others salary and that companies seek to hide their discriminatory behavior making it unlikely that victims would discover the discrimination within the mere six months that current law requires. Congress must right the wrong to prevent employers from discriminating, taking money out of workers’ pockets and getting away with it.

To learn more about the issue of equal pay for equal work and the Checklist for Change, visit the website above or log on to iTunes and subscribe to the Checklist for Change podcasts <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=283711777>. Each week the Checklist for Change releases a new podcast to educate viewers about the issues that Democrats are fighting for to keep the American dream an affordable reality.

###