Support the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 182)

July 22, 2010

Dear Senator:

The recovery of the American middle class begins and ends with good-paying jobs, but that cannot happen if women continue to earn less than they deserve. AAUW’s report, Behind the Pay Gap, controlled for factors known to affect earnings such as education and training, parenthood and hours worked, and found that college-educated women still earn less than men – even when they have the same major and occupation as their male counterparts.¹

On behalf of the 100,000 bipartisan members and donors of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to support the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 182) and make passing the bill before Congress adjourns a priority. This measure provides a much needed, first-ever update to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, bringing the law’s principles and practices in line with the nation’s other civil rights laws. The Paycheck Fairness Act takes meaningful steps to create incentives for employers to follow the law, empower women to negotiate for equal pay, and strengthen federal outreach and enforcement efforts. The bill would also deter discrimination by strengthening penalties for equal pay violations and by prohibiting retaliation against workers who inquire about employers’ wage practices or disclose their own wages.

Without the Paycheck Fairness Act, women will continue to be silenced in the workplace—prohibited from talking about wages with coworkers without the fear of being fired. This forced silence keeps women—like it kept Lilly Ledbetter—from discovering pay discrimination against them. The fear of being fired is strong enough to keep women from even broaching the subject, especially in this economy.

There is no higher priority for the American public than rebuilding the economy and creating jobs, and working towards pay equity is a critical step in that direction. In fact, in a recently released poll, 84 percent of voters supported “a new law that would provide women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace.”² For the first time in American history, women represent half of the paid workforce, and two-thirds of women are either the primary or co-bread winner for their families.³ In other words, pay equity is not just a moral issue; it is an economic imperative with enormous implications not just for women but for working families, communities and the nation’s recovery. In this economic climate, your constituents will thank you for taking the time to attend to such a critical issue.

Quite simply, pay equity is more critical than ever. It’s time for the Senate to join the House and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. For more information, contact David Kronig in Sen. Christopher Dodd’s office at David_Kronig@dodd.senate.gov or 224-2823.

Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund Congressional Voting Record for the 111th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Tracy Sherman, AAUW government relations manager, at 202/785-7730, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations