

Thanks to your ACTIONS: A Win for Women

President Obama Signs Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into Law

U.S. President Barack Obama signed legislation into law on January 29 making it easier for employees to sue for wage discrimination. United Methodist Women have long ACTED to ensure nondiscrimination and pay equity. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act restores the long-standing interpretation of civil rights laws and EEOC policies that allow employees to challenge any discriminatory paycheck they receive. At the bill-signing ceremony President Obama said: "It is fitting that the very first bill that I sign ... is upholding one of this nation's founding principles: that we are all created equal and each deserve a chance to pursue our own version of happiness."

Statistics on women in the workplace speak to the need for action. The average woman earns just 78 cents of every dollar earned by her male counterparts, and disparities appear just one year out of college---even for those with the same job and the same major. Women of color make even less.

Lilly Ledbetter worked for nearly two decades at the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company in Gadsden, Alabama. Despite receiving top performance awards, Ledbetter discovered that she had been paid significantly less than male co-workers with the same job. After her November 1998 retirement, she filed suit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was awarded back pay and other remedies in a jury trial. The U.S. Supreme Court's 5 to 4 decision not only erased Ledbetter's award, but also left women, minorities, and others in Ledbetter's situation with virtually no recourse to pay discrimination.

Obama noted that women in the U.S. make 78 cents for every dollar men earn, but said equal pay isn't simply a women's issue. "It's about parents who find themselves with less money for tuition and child care, couples who wind up with less to retire on, households where one breadwinner is paid less than she deserves," Obama said. "That's the difference between affording the mortgage or not, between keeping the heat on, or paying the doctor bills, or not."

This is a win we can all celebrate.

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