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February 6, 2012

Dear Members of the Assembly Women and Children Committee:

Re: Support AR-50 – Urges Congress to Pass the “Paycheck Fairness Act”

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO supports AR-50 and thanks Assemblywoman Lampitt for her leadership on the issue of pay fairness for women and for being a vocal advocate for women and children issues. To summarize the wage gap in a nutshell: women must work more than three months longer to earn the same money as men, because women's wages still average just 77 percent of what men earn. Because of the wage gap, since 1960, the real median earnings of women have fallen short by more than half a million dollars compared to men. Furthermore, minority women face even a larger wage gap. Compared to white men, African American women make 70 cents on the dollar (African American men make 74 cents) and Hispanic or Latina women make about 60 cents (Hispanic men make almost 66 cents).

The drastically changing dynamics of the American family structure continues to strengthen pro-women and pro-worker policy initiatives. No longer can it be assumed, nor can we tolerate the stigma that the “man is responsible for bringing home the bacon.” Today’s dual income earner environment has become the norm, not the exception for America’s working families, and the AFL-CIO has taken a lead role in educating lawmakers to embrace policies that allow females not only equal pay in the workplace, but also the ability to raise a family while holding down a full time job. The AFL-CIO is dedicated to the principle that all families should have the social and material resources necessary to raise their children to be healthy, educated, and productive members of the community.

Organized labor is one of the primary groups that are advocating on behalf of proper wages. Unions not only bring wage setting into the forefront of public policy debate, but also help to ensure that employers base wage rates on objective factors. Whether it is our support for local living wage campaigns at the county and municipal level or increases in the state’s minimum wage, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO has been the leader on the top of wage reform.

The union movement in America has been part of leading the charge to ensure pay equality for women and all workers. The “union difference” allows for the bargaining of enforceable wage standards which leads to a 30 percent increase in average pay for women who are in a union compared to those who are not. That could be the difference between a lifetime of struggle or one of economic security for many working women.

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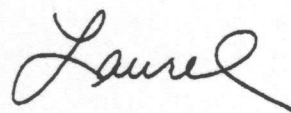
Fortunately, some of our allies in Congress think that the wage gap is as outrageous as we do. The Paycheck Fairness Act was reintroduced on April 12, 2011 by Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Sen. Barbara Mikulsi (H.R-1519 & S-797). Both New Jersey Senators Menendez and Lautenberg are sponsors, as well as seven members of our House Congressional Delegation.

In the last Congress, the Paycheck Fairness Act passed the House, but fell just a few votes short of moving forward in the Senate. We must work to pass it this year and the resolution before you today will send a strong message to Congress that it is a priority for the people of New Jersey.

Sincerely,



Charles Wowkanech
President



Laurel Brennan
Secretary-Treasurer

CW:LB:jn
OPEIU:153