

Carolyn B. Lamm
President

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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July 26, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: ABA Support for the Paycheck Fairness Act

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I am writing to urge you to support prompt passage of S. 182, the Paycheck Fairness Act, which may come to the Senate floor for a vote as an amendment to related legislation or as a freestanding bill. Swiftly passed by the House of Representatives as H.R. 12 in January 2009, the legislation has stalled in the Senate for over 18 months even though it is supported by the Administration and has the widespread support of working women across the country. Senate inaction has unnecessarily denied women the legal tools that they need to assure they receive equal pay for equal work.

The Paycheck Fairness Act proposes much needed modifications and improvements to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, passed by Congress specifically to prohibit gender-based wage discrimination. Unfortunately, the statute has failed to achieve its objective. Fifty years after passage of this historic civil rights legislation, wage discrimination remains a persistent, wide-spread and pernicious problem. Women today, regardless of their educational level, their occupation, or their state of residence, still receive unequal pay for equal work, even in jobs such as secretary or nurse that are predominantly held by women.

With a record 71 million women in the workforce, gender-based wage discrimination hurts American families. Today, in part as a result of the recession, more than 12 million families rely primarily on the mother's earnings. This is not a phenomenon concentrated in certain areas of the country: more than a third of the mothers in working families in 48 states are the family's primary breadwinner. In addition, the wages of working mothers in another seven million families constitute at least twenty-five percent of the family's income.

By helping improve the present and future economic welfare of working women, the Paycheck Fairness Act will help countless families pay their bills and achieve financial security. As the recession continues to take its toll, passage of this legislation is one small but significant step that Congress can take to help working families and strengthen our economy.

Earlier this week, the White House Middle Class Task Force announced that one of the key recommendations of its Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force is the swift enactment of the Paycheck Fairness Act so that federal officials will have adequate tools to fight wage discrimination. This is a call to action that the Senate should heed.

It is clear that lip service alone to the American ideal of a workplace free of discrimination will not help eradicate gender-based wage discrimination. We urge you to transform rhetoric into action by supporting floor consideration and voting in favor of this much-needed remedial legislation.

Please contact Denise A. Cardman, Deputy Director of the Governmental Affairs Office, at cardmand@staff.abanet.org if we can provide additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn B. Lamm". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Carolyn B. Lamm
President