

Congressman Rothman Marks Equal Pay Day; Calls for Closing the Wage Gap between Men and Women

(Washington, DC)

— Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ), made the following statement as the country marks Equal Pay Day:

“Equal Pay Day marks April 28th as the day in our 2009 calendar when the average American woman’s wages will finally catch up with those paid to the average American man in 2008. The special attention given to this occasion serves as an important reminder of the persistent wage gap between men and women in the United States and the need to take action to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work.

“In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, women who worked full-time, year-round, made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. In 2007, women earned 78 cents for every dollar earned by men and in New Jersey only 77 cents. That is some progress, but it is not enough.

“Equal pay is not just a woman’s issue, it is a family issue. The wage gap hurts everyone because it lowers family incomes that pay for increasingly expensive essentials, such as groceries, doctors’ visits, and child care. When a woman earns more, an entire family sees the benefits. That is why closing the wage gap must be an integral part of strengthening America’s families and seeing them through these tough economic times.

“In the current economic downturn, many New Jersey residents are facing financial problems, stagnant wages and living standards, and job loss. Women in New Jersey already live with great economic challenges — on average they have lower earnings than men (\$30,301 compared to \$44,198 in 2007) and are more likely to live in poverty (9% of New Jersey women compared to 6% of men lived in poverty in 2007). As a result, women are particularly vulnerable to economic hardships in this struggling economy.

“Achieving equal pay for women is one of the top priorities of the 111th Congress. I am pleased that in January, we sent to the President’s desk the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act – giving women the right to seek legal redress for wage discrimination – and it was the first major bill signed into law by President Obama. The importance of achieving pay fairness for women was highlighted by the fact that this was the first order of business for the new Congress.

“I urge the Senate to pass and send to the President’s desk the Paycheck Fairness Act, which the House passed on January 9th. The Act provides further layers of protection for women facing wage discrimination. The bill broadens the types of damages that women can seek in court, while updating the standards that their employers must meet when attempting to justify lower wages for female employees

“On Equal Pay Day 2009, let us all vow, in order to strengthen the American family and ensure fairness in the workplace, that we will work together so that women will have equal pay for equal work.”

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