



August 20, 2013

Governor Matthew Mead
State Capitol Building
Room 124
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Re: Equal Pay Today! Platform – Response Requested

Dear Governor Mead:

We are writing to follow-up on the invitation we extended to you on June 10, 2013 (the 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act of 1963) to join and support an exciting campaign to eradicate the gender wage gap that exists in every state in this country, including yours.

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign is led by national and state-based organizations from around the country dedicated to ensuring equal pay for women. Those organizations listed below represent hundreds of thousands of women and their families living and working in every state in the country. See the Equal Pay Today! Platform and Letters to All Fifty Governors at www.equalrights.org/Equal-Pay-Today. In the months ahead, the Campaign will be coordinating with organizations in your state taking leadership on equal pay and other gender justice issues.

On August 26, 2013, Women's Equality Day, the Campaign will begin to highlight the governors who are taking action in their state to close the wage gap and we hope to count you among the governors taking leadership on this issue. We appreciate that both the size of the wage gap and the laws addressing this problem differ among the states, but we hope to work with you to identify specific, concrete steps you could take in your state to address this urgent issue. We'll be highlighting actions like these that are moving the states forward:

- The establishment of a state commission, like those in Montana and Maryland, gathering a broad range of stakeholders who will evaluate how to close the gender wage gap state by state and to develop recommendations and best practices.
- A public statement or proclamation by Governors in honor of Women's Equality Day that describes the steps already taken to close the gender wage gap and the ways in which Governors will work to improve on these efforts to ensure women's equal pay.

- Support of bills to improve the equal pay laws, or commitment to join governors like Gov. Cuomo of New York who created a Women's Equality Agenda and submitted a comprehensive package of bills to the state legislature that will close the gender wage gap.
- Enactment or enforcement of laws like Minnesota's that ensure that public employees receive equal pay for jobs that are equivalent in skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.
- Executive action to improve state equal pay laws, especially among the state and local contractors who have the privilege of conducting business with states like yours.
- The establishment of a state task force to better coordinate data collection and improve enforcement of pay and other employment discrimination laws.

We would like to talk with you about what has been accomplished in your state and share information about what other states are doing to support our effort. If you respond by August 25, we will be sure to acknowledge your interest in this issue and your efforts to date in our news launch on August 26.

Please contact Equal Pay Today! Campaign Member Noreen Farrell, Executive Director at Equal Rights Advocates (415.575.2398 or nfarrell@equalrights.org) to let us know which staffer is the appropriate contact or with any questions, comments, and action plans.

We look forward to your partnership and leadership on this important issue impacting so many women and their families in your state.

Sincerely,

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EQUAL PAY TODAY! PLATFORM

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign, launched on the 50th Anniversary of the Equal Pay Act by national and state-based women's rights organizations, calls for an end to the gender wage gap that persists in nearly every industry and profession in the country. This gap varies by state and city, by education level and occupation, and is magnified for African American and Hispanic women.

The Equal Pay Today! Campaign includes organizations from across the country. We join together to call for action to end the practices and close the loopholes in existing laws that contribute to women making on average only 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. These practices include:

- **Less pay for the same job:** Women are paid less than men in nearly every occupation. One study examining wage gaps within occupations found that out of 265 major occupations, men's median salary exceeded women's in all but one. Economists have documented the role of gender bias in employment decisions through studies that show women were offered fewer job opportunities and lower pay, even when they had identical resumes as men. To close the wage gap, we must address discrimination in pay and promotions on the same job.
- **Job segregation:** Sex role stereotypes lead to women being segregated into female-dominated jobs such as retail sales, home health care, and child care. These jobs pay low wages and are often part-time. Today, women make up nearly 2/3 of the adult minimum wage workforce and the minimum wage is too low. Jobs considered to be "women's work" typically pay less than male-dominated jobs requiring equivalent skill and effort, and women remain under-represented in higher paying work traditionally done by men, such as construction, fire-fighting and policing.
- **Retaliation against workers for discussing their pay:** Today, a majority of employees report that they are either prohibited or actively discouraged from discussing their pay. Employers with policies preventing employees from sharing pay information keep women in the dark about pay differences, limiting their ability to negotiate for higher pay and to enforce their rights under the equal pay laws.
- **Pay reductions due to pregnancy and caregiving responsibilities.** Employers pay women less from the moment of hire and deny them promotions because they automatically presume women will have children and then will commit less time and dedication to their jobs. If women do get pregnant or take on caregiving responsibilities, they sometimes lose income because of overt discrimination based on these stereotypes. They also lose pay when they are deprived of opportunities to advance to higher paid jobs or are pushed out of work altogether because employers do not accommodate needs that may arise for women as a result of pregnancy and caregiving, including through paid family leave or paid sick days, and flexible, predictable, and stable schedules. The result is that women experience diminished income throughout their working lives.
- **Wage theft:** Being paid less than the minimum wage, being shorted hours, being forced to work off the clock, not being paid overtime, and not being paid at all are pervasive practices across many industries. Women, especially immigrant women in low-wage jobs, are often the hardest hit by wage theft. According to a survey of low-wage workers in America's three largest cities (Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City), women were significantly more likely than men to experience minimum wage violations, and 47% of the undocumented women workers surveyed reported wage violations by their employer. Employers who fail to pay women workers the wages owed to them deny these women the fair pay they need to support themselves and their families.

For a list of organizations that have joined the Platform and a full version of the Platform with citations, see <http://www.equalrights.org/our-work/marginalized-women-workers/current-advocacy/equal-pay-today/>