

Democratic Leaders Introduce Equal Pay Enforcement Act for Wisconsin

Written by GBP Staff

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MADISON - State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) and State Representative Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) announced today that they will be introducing the Equal Pay Enforcement Act, legislation aimed at closing the gap in pay between men and women.

The Equal Pay Enforcement Act which was signed into law in 2009 was repealed when Governor Walker and Republicans took control of the Legislature in 2011. It is being introduced in honor of Equal Pay Day which is taking place tomorrow, April 14th.



“Even though equal pay has been the law federally since 1963 and in Wisconsin since 1945, women are still often paid less than men 60 years later. This holds true even when women match or exceed their male colleagues in education, skills and experience,” said Sen. Hansen. “This gap in pay is costing Wisconsin women and their families on average \$10,000 per year. As a result, Wisconsin families have less money to support their families and our economy.”

2008 Census statistics showed the national pay gap improved less than one percent between 2006 and 2007, from 76.9 to 77.8 percent. However, in the year following passage of the Equal Pay Enforcement Act, Wisconsin was one of a handful of states that actually saw the gap between women’s and men’s pay narrow:

- Median female earnings as a percentage of median male earnings rose by 3.0% in Wisconsin between 2009 and 2010. Only four states had larger increases.
- Wisconsin jumped 12 spots in the gender earnings parity ranking between 2009 and 2010, from 36th to 24th.



“When we finally passed the Equal Pay Enforcement Act, we hoped the new law would lead to improved wages for women, fewer families living in poverty, and economic growth resulting from the increased money they would spend in our state’s businesses,” said Assembly author Rep.

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Sinicki. “We believe 2009 Act 20 had definitely set Wisconsin on the path towards that goal. But the repeal of the Equal Pay Enforcement Act halted the progress that had been made.

Stronger enforcement of the state’s Equal Pay law is important because:

- women on average earn \$10,000 less than male employees for doing the same work;
- the wage gap in Wisconsin deprives our overall state economy of \$8 billion or more per year;
- over 231,000 households in Wisconsin are headed by women, and others provide crucial portions of income in families with more than one working parent;
- 31.4 percent, or 72,779, of families headed by women live in poverty, despite their full-time wages.

“We have decades of experience showing that lack of strong enforcement of the current equal pay law leaves it ineffective at best and, at worst, truly hurting Wisconsin’s families and our economy,” said Rep. Sinicki.

“While Republicans have said they support equal pay they eliminated the best tool we had to enforce the law and close the gap—the ability of victims of wage discrimination to get justice through our civil court system,” said Sen. Hansen. “It is time to reinstate what we believe was a law that provided strong enforcement against wage discrimination and a tool to strengthen middle class families.”