

Program on a Page 2011-2012
AAUW of Michigan
Pay Equity in 2011-12

- During World War I, the War Labor Board of 1918 required that manufacturers who put women on the payroll while men served in the military must pay women the same wages as they would men;
- During World War II, the National War Labor Board, in 1942, “urged” employers to equalize wages and salary rates for women for work comparable or equal to men’s salaries;
- In 1945, the first bill prohibiting pay discrimination was introduced in Congress. Neither it nor subsequent bills passed because they called for “equal pay for comparable work.”
- In 1963, the Equal Pay Act made it illegal for women to receive lower wages based solely on gender.

Michigan, without using the specific “comparable work” language, uses the word “similar” and makes violations of equal pay a misdemeanor.

In 2008, in his first bill signing, President Obama signed the **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act** ensuring that victims of pay discrimination can seek restitution and justice for wage discrimination. The Paycheck Fairness Act would build on the Equal Pay Act to create stronger incentives for employers to follow the law; empower women to negotiate for equal pay (see AAUW’s \$Start \$Smart program for college campuses), and strengthen federal outreach, education and enforcement efforts.

Current figures estimate that women between the ages of 45-64 who work full time receive about 77% of what men make in “comparable” jobs. In Michigan, according to 2009 statistics, the earnings ratio is 72%. The War Labor Board in 1918 could not have conceived of the number of women in the work force in 2011-12. However, many of those currently working are the primary wage earners or are working at least two jobs to support their families. Paycheck fairness impacts families’ economic security and the nation’s economic health.

AAUW strongly advocates for the Paycheck Fairness Act as part of its public policy agenda and urges branches to do the same.

The 2011 publication *The Simple Truth About the Gender Gap* is a valuable resource as is the AAUW **Pay Equity Resource Kit**. For more information, visit www.aauw.org or contact AAUW’s Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Lisa Maatz, 202.785.7720.

Pam Hoffman, AAUW of Michigan State Secretary/Initiative Director November 2011.