



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

Gender Wage Gap, Current Threats to Economic Justice Linked *Statement of NOW President Terry O'Neill*

April 12, 2011

Today we mark Equal Pay Day, which occurs at a pivotal time for U.S. workers, particularly women. As feminists call attention to the persistent gender wage gap, we would do well to demonstrate its link to the various ways government and big business are breeding economic injustice in this nation.

Tomorrow, President Barack Obama will offer his deficit-reduction plan for the 2012 budget cycle. Will he stand with women? Or will he, in the name of misguided "compromise" with extremists, support cuts in Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security?

Currently, women are paid 77 cents on the dollar compared to men. Women workers -- full-time, year-round workers, mind you -- have been stuck making between 70 and 80 percent of male salaries for *two decades now*. Equal Pay Day is a vivid reminder of this inequity -- it illustrates how far into the new year the average woman must work in order to catch up with what the average man was paid in the previous year. It's important to note that women of color's salaries, compounded by race-based discrimination, lag even further behind the average.

The wage gap makes women especially dependent on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. These programs keep millions of middle-class women out of poverty -- just one of the reasons a majority of voters strongly support these programs.

The Republicans' 2012 budget, introduced by Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, would voucherize Medicare, block-grant Medicaid and cut Social Security benefits, all in order to pay for increased tax breaks for corporations and multimillionaires. The Ryan budget is a stark betrayal of ordinary working women who already have a hard time supporting their families and saving for retirement on unequal wages.

Who will stop the Republicans from further dismantling the social safety net? Can we count on President Obama to stand up for economic justice?

Women will support those who take action to close the wage gap and preserve and strengthen Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. These are fundamental values that must not be compromised away.

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For Immediate Release

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