



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

MEDIA RELEASE

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No Fooling: Maine's Gender Wage Gap is Growing

On Equal Pay Day, Advocates Call for Renewed Emphasis on Equal Pay

Augusta, ME – Maine's Equal Pay Day falls on April 1 this year, but advocates think it's no joke. Forty-three years after the passage of Maine's Equal Pay Act, the wage gap is growing again. The most recent data from the 2006 American Community Survey pins women's wages at an average of 75% compared to men's wages. The gap is even wider for Hispanic and African-American women.

"If the wage gap continues to persist at this level, young women, soon to enter the workforce, will see the loss of between \$500,000 and \$2 million over the course of their lifetime," announced Karen Keim, board chair of Girl Scouts of Maine. She continued, "That's why Girl Scouts of Maine and the Wage Project Maine are launching a new "ValYOU" patch in time for the new program year. We're serious about girls learning the skills necessary to negotiate fair pay as they enter the workforce."

Said Samantha Lott, Director of Membership for Girl Scouts of Maine, "When I heard that women earn just 75 cents for every dollar a man earns, I thought, 'you MUST be joking.' That's why we're teaching girls how to talk about money, how to negotiate for fair pay, and how to value themselves. Every girl should have these skills."

"The joke's on us, unless we take action," said Sarah Standiford, Executive Director of the Maine Women's Lobby. "Fortunately, there are steps we can take right now to solve the problem of the wage gap – for ourselves and on behalf of all women. First, women can learn powerful skills of negotiation for better wages. Resources for skills negotiation are

available at www.wageproject.org. Second, if possible, women can encourage their employers to conduct a self-audit to determine if there are inadvertent disparities in the way they pay their workers. When employers conduct a self-audit, which is available at www.maine.gov/labor, they also create a defense against complaints of pay discrimination down the road. Finally, women who think they may be receiving unequal treatment can contact the Maine Women's Lobby at info@mainewomen.org."

"There are many resources available for women who want to get involved in ending the wage gap, and we can make progress in Maine," said Standiford. "But there's one thing we know for sure; without attention, women will lose thousands of dollars of needed income each year – and that's no laughing matter."

Equal Pay Day symbolizes how far into the year a woman must work, on average, to earn as much as a man earned the previous year. In Maine, Equal Pay Day is recognized the first Tuesday of every April.

The Maine Women's Lobby is a non-partisan, non-profit membership organization working since 1978 to increase opportunities for women and girls through advocacy and legislative action.

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