

Washington, DC- As the country marks Equal Pay Day on April 28, Congressman Charles A. Gonzalez (TX-20) calls upon all Americans to work together to achieve equal pay for equal work.

In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, women who worked full-time, year-round made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. In 2007, women earned 78 cents for every dollar earned by men. That is progress – but it is slow progress. It means that the wage gap has narrowed by less than half a cent per year.

“Equal pay is not just a women’s issue, it’s a family issue,” said Rep. Gonzalez. “The wage gap hurts everyone in the family– husbands, wives, children, and parents – because it lowers incomes that pay for essentials: groceries, doctors’ visits, child care. When women earn more, an entire family benefits. Closing the wage gap must be an integral part of strengthening America’s families.”

In January the Congress sent to the President’s desk the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act – and it became the first major bill signed into law by President Obama, highlighting the importance of achieving equity for women.

The Lilly Ledbetter Act restores the right of women and other workers to challenge unfair pay in court. Specifically, it rectifies the May 2007 Ledbetter v Goodyear Supreme Court decision that overturned precedent and made it much more difficult for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. The bill simply restores the longstanding interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and other discrimination statutes, thereby protecting women and other workers.

“The enactment of the Lilly Ledbetter Act was a major victory for America’s women,” stated Rep. Gonzalez. “The Paycheck Fairness Act is equally important, providing the tools necessary to give strength to the Equal Pay Act and provide incentives for businesses to follow the law in the first place.”

The Paycheck Fairness Act is a comprehensive update to the 46-year-old Equal Pay Act that brings equal pay laws in line with other civil rights laws. This bill would take real steps to deter wage discrimination by empowering women to negotiate for equal pay, creating stronger

incentives for employers to follow the law, and strengthening federal enforcement efforts.

“On this Equal Pay Day 2009, let us all vow to work together until women are truly paid equal pay for equal work,” concluded Rep. Gonzalez.

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