

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 29, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to request that you sign an Executive Order that would prohibit federal contractors from retaliating against workers who share information about their own pay.

Four years ago we took an important step with the enactment of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which kept the courthouse door open to allow workers to challenge pay discrimination. Your strong leadership was essential to making this happen. As you made clear in your inaugural address, our job of ensuring women receive fair pay will not be complete “until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts.” With women earning 77 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts, and the gap even larger for women of color, our work is far from finished.

That is why we recently reintroduced the Paycheck Fairness Act. Your support for this common sense solution to the lingering problem of pay inequity has been critical. But we know that women and their families cannot wait any longer for progress to finally be made on a wage gap that has not budged in a decade. An Executive Order focused on the gender gap in federal contracting would greatly enhance millions of employees’ ability to learn about wage disparities and provide workers with much-needed certainty that their livelihoods would not be at stake if they discuss their wages.

As we mark the anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act today, we are reminded why addressing punitive pay secrecy policies are so important. After working for Goodyear, a federal contractor, for nearly 20 years, Lilly Ledbetter learned that she was paid as much as 40 percent less than her male coworkers. Goodyear had a policy prohibiting employees from discussing their wages; Lilly only learned of her pay discrimination when she received an anonymous note revealing the salaries of her male counterparts. A 2010 study by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research shows that Lilly Ledbetter’s story happens all too often. That survey found that almost a quarter of private-sector employees work in settings with formal policies against discussing salary information and/or where workers can be punished for discussing their salaries. And over 61 percent of the private-sector workers surveyed reported that discussing their wages is either prohibited or discouraged.

It is critical that we continue to press for the comprehensive and lasting reforms in the Paycheck Fairness Act. But as we move forward on this important bill, we urge you to ensure contractors who have the privilege of doing business with the federal government cannot retaliate against workers who discuss their own pay.

We thank you for considering our request. We look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve economic security for women and their families.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress