

Michaud Applauds House Passage of Bills Promoting Equal Pay for Equal Work

Friday, January 09 2009

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Michaud voted to pass H.R. 11, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and H.R. 12, the Paycheck Fairness Act. Michaud is an original cosponsor of both pieces of legislation and has long championed passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act. The legislation is designed to promote pay equity between men and women. In 2007, on average, women in Maine working full-time, year-round earned 76 percent of what men working full-time, year-round earned – one percentage point below the nationwide average of 78 percent (U.S. Census Bureau)

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“Today is a great day, but I wish these bills were not necessary,” said Michaud. “It is long past time that we end the discriminatory practice of paying a woman less than a man for performing the same job. As families struggle with the current economic crisis, it is more important than ever that working women get paid fairly and equally. I am pleased that we passed these two bills during the first week of the new Congress.”

The Lilly Ledbetter Act is named for a woman who worked for nearly two decades at a Goodyear Tire and Rubber facility in Alabama. She sued the company when she learned that she was paid less than her male counterparts at the plant, despite having more experience. A jury found that her employer had unlawfully discriminated against her on the basis of sex. However, the Supreme Court said that Ledbetter had waited too long to sue for pay discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Act simply restores the law as it was prior to the Supreme Court’s decision. The Court ruled that a pay discrimination claim must be filed within 180 days of the employer’s initial decision to pay an employee less. This bill restores prior law – that each paycheck resulting from a discriminatory pay decision would constitute a new violation of employment nondiscrimination law.

The Paycheck Fairness Act will strengthen the Equal Pay Act and close the loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid responsibility for discriminatory pay. The bill will give women the same access to recover back pay and damages as victims of other types of pay discrimination. The bill also protects employees who discuss pay information from retaliation by their employers. On average, women make 78 cents for every dollar earned by men (U.S. Census Bureau).

“While we were successful in passing both of these bills in the House last year, they got stuck in the U.S. Senate. I am hopeful that newly elected Senators and the incoming Obama Administration will make the difference, and that we will once and for all be able to pass these bills into law. I was proud to cast my vote in favor of these bills.”

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