

## On Equal Pay Day, Rep. Rothman Continues to Urge Congressional Action to Ensure Equal Pay for Equal Work

For Immediate Release: April 22, 2008

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### On Equal Pay Day, Rep. Rothman Continues to Urge Congressional Action to Ensure Equal Pay for Equal Work

(Washington, DC)-Today, Equal Pay Day, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) expressed his continuing strong support for legislation to strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and close the wage gap between women and men. To make equal pay for equal work a reality, Rothman has co-sponsored the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R.1338) and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (H.R. 2831). These bills aim to provide more effective remedies to women who receive discriminatory pay and hold employers accountable for paying women less than their male colleagues for comparable work.

"It is outrageous that pay discrimination continues to be a reality in the workplace. With four teenage daughters in my household, I am committed to fighting for their right to be treated fairly and compensated equally for their hard work. There is no defense for an elected official to support unconstitutional discrimination and no excuse for an employer to pay women employees less than their male counterparts for the same work. It is my hope that the Senate is able to complete final passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act this week so that it can become law and that Congress will act soon to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act," said Rothman.

In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, women who worked full-time and year-round made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. In 2006, women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. That means it takes the average woman 16 months to earn what men earn in one calendar year and that the wage gap has narrowed by less than half a cent per year.

To address this disparity, the Paycheck Fairness Act would increase penalties against employers who discriminate in the payment of wages; enhance the Department of Labor's outreach and training programs to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities; and enable employees to share salary information with their co-workers. It also authorizes the Secretary of Labor to fund negotiation skills training programs for girls and women.

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which passed the House of Representatives in July 2007 by a vote of 225 to 199 and now requires final action in the Senate, would address the 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court in May 2007 in the matter of Ledbetter v Goodyear. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that a worker must file a charge of pay discrimination within 180 days of the employer's initial decision to pay someone less for discriminatory reasons. This opinion, however, ignores the realities of the workplace - where workers may go for years without knowing that they are being paid less than comparable employees.

H.R. 2831 would rectify this disastrous decision from the Supreme Court, now led by Justice John Roberts, a Bush Administration appointee, and restore the longstanding interpretation of civil rights laws, under which as long as a worker files within 180 days of a discriminatory paycheck, their charges are timely.

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