



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Hansen and Sinicki Announce Equal Pay Bills on National Equal Pay Day

Madison — Democrats Rep. Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) and Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) announced that today, on National Equal Pay Day, they will be reintroducing their Equal Pay Bills from the last legislative session: the Equal Pay Enforcement Act and the Equal Pay Transparency Act.

The Equal Pay Enforcement Act, [passed into law in 2009](#) but [repealed in 2012 by legislative Republicans](#), adds the possibility of damages as redress for women or any employee who has suffered pay or other job discrimination.

“The sad fact is that, at a time when more and more attention is rightfully being paid to how women are treated in terms of sexual harassment, sexual assault and other forms of inappropriate behavior towards them, the issue of equal pay continues to largely be ignored. To respect women is to pay them the same as men and to treat them the same in the workplace,” said Hansen.

The gender wage gap in Wisconsin, [at 75 cents in 2009](#), actually narrowed while the Equal Pay Enforcement Act was in place. However, progress slowed on closing the gap when Scott Walker and the Republicans in the Legislature repealed the law. Since that time, the pay equity gap is a little smaller at [80 cents that women make](#), on average across the workforce, for every dollar that men make in Wisconsin.

While strengthening Wisconsin’s equal pay law is critical to closing gap between women’s and men’s pay, another way employers pay women less starts at the interview and hiring process where employers often ask job applicants how much they’ve been paid in past jobs.

The Equal Pay Transparency Act would address the problem by preventing employers from starting the pay of new employees at the level of their previous job. The bill limits employers’ inquiries about prior pay to the point at which they have already made an offer to hire an applicant, and then only with that person’s permission. Another key part of the bill prohibits employers from forbidding their employees from discussing their own compensation with co-workers.

Rep. Sinicki added, “As with most issues of unfairness and discrimination, one of the best ways to expose it is to allow workers to discuss these issues freely among themselves,

without fear of being punished by their boss. The other is to prohibit employers from engaging in their own discriminatory practices in the first place.”

Hansen and Sinicki said they would soon begin circulating their two Equal Pay proposals for co-authors in the Legislature. They also thanked Gov. Tony Evers for his [Equal Pay Day Proclamation](#), and Christine Lidbury, Director of the Wisconsin Women’s Council, [for gathering this year’s figures on the wage gap in Wisconsin](#).

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Other commentary and information about Equal Pay Day and the wage gap:

“Womansplaining the Pay Gap”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/business/equal-pay-day.html>

National Women’s Law Center (NWLC): <https://nwlc.org/issue/equal-pay-and-the-wage-gap/>

American Association of University Women (AAUW): <https://www.aauw.org/fairpay/>

National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE): <https://www.pay-equity.org/day.html>

U.S. Census: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/2018/equal-pay.html>

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