

Talbert, Lilly

From: Talbert, Lilly
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 8:23 AM
To: Talbert, Lilly
Subject: VCW VIEW: editorial: Today is Equal Pay Day

-15%: WAGE GAP IN VERMONT ON EQUAL PAY DAY 2014

The American Association of University Women recently released their 2014 report detailing the wage gap between men and women in the country. The good news is that Vermont's wage gap is tied for second lowest – Vermont women make 85% of the money that Vermont men make, second only to Washington D.C., where women make 90% of what men make.

The bad news is that the last time this report came out, women in Vermont were making 87% of what men made. The wage gap is growing.

On Tuesday, April 8, 2014, Governor Shumlin will sign a proclamation recognizing Equal Pay Day. This is the symbolic day in 2014 when women's earnings finally catch up to men's from 2013. Nationally, women make just 77 cents for every dollar that men make, so we can feel proud that in Vermont we're doing a bit better than in most of the country.

But why do we still have a wage gap at all? Why does it persist, and even grow, in spite of the fact that we've had a federal law on the books outlawing pay discrimination for over fifty years?

Some will still insist that it's women's choices that lead to a wage gap. Women choose to go into occupations that pay less (number one job for women in the 1950s? Secretary. Number one job for women in the 2010s? Secretary!). Women also choose to take time off from working in order to tend to family responsibilities, so they get left behind in the hours they work and in the raises and promotions they qualify for.

But why is it that the jobs that are dominated by men pay more than the jobs that are dominated by women? And why is it that women are bearing a greater burden of family responsibility than men are? Even when men do take time away from work to care for their families, they are much less likely to say that it hurt their career than women are.

But consider the fact that a number of studies have found that even when discounting the impact of these choices, there is still a persistent wage gap. Among recent college graduates, in their first jobs, when we adjust for factors such as occupation choice, hours worked, and GPA, women are still earning just 93% of what men do.

Clearly, there is more going on than women's individual choices.

Last year, in the first case brought to court under Vermont's equal pay law, a woman sued because she was replaced with a man who was paid much more in his starting pay than she was after many years

of experience. Even after accounting for any legitimate disparities, Judge William Sessions rejected the employer’s argument that the higher pay was justified, writing, “Any gap in the pay of men and women, whether forty or ten percent, is an implicit statement to our children that we value the work of our daughters less than that of our sons.”

Fifty years ago, Governor Philip Hoff created the Vermont Commission on Women, in recognition of the need to advance rights and opportunities for women in Vermont. Women earned just 59 cents for a man’s dollar back in 1964, so we know we’re going in the right direction. I look forward to the day – hopefully not in another fifty years – when we’ll celebrate Equal Pay Day on December 31.

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About the Commission: *The Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) is an independent non-partisan state agency made up of sixteen volunteer commissioners and an advisory council who guide public education, coalition building and advocacy efforts. VCW offers many services to the public, including a toll-free information and referral service at 800-881-1561 and many publications, including the handbook, [The Legal Rights of Women in Vermont](#). The Commission celebrates its 50th anniversary at the State House on Wednesday April 9th. Learn more at women.vermont.gov.*

About Cary Brown: *Cary Brown is the Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women. She has worked as the Director of Girls’ Programs for Vermont Works for Women, a non-profit organization supporting education, training and careers in non-traditional fields for women and girls, and directed the Women in Technology Project, a national award–winning summer technology camp for girls at Vermont Technical College. She lives in Montpelier.*

