

Talbert, Lilly

From: Talbert, Lilly
Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2013 9:13 AM
To: Talbert, Lilly
Subject: Press Release: Gov. Shumlin signing Equal Pay bill into law tomorrow

What: Gov. Shumlin signing Equal Pay bill into law

When: Tuesday May 14th at 11:45

Where: UVM's Davis Center during Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility spring conference

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(Burlington) –This morning at 11:45 a.m. Governor Shumlin will sign into law a bill strengthening protections for Vermont workers around a number of issues, most notably for equal pay. The bill, introduced in the House as H.99 and Senate as S.57, includes provisions for equal pay; protections for employees who ask coworkers what they are paid; certification of compliance of government contractors with Vermont's equal pay laws; protections for new mothers who must express breast milk for their babies at work; protections for employees to request flexible working arrangements; and establishment of a study committee looking at the mechanics of a paid family leave law in Vermont.

Lead sponsors of this legislation were Representative Jill Krowinski and Senator Sally Fox. "The Equal Pay Law is a victory for all working Vermonters," says Rep. Krowinski. "This law will bring consistent protection against retaliation, strengthen our current equal pay provisions, and open the door to flexible work arrangements. With Vermont women making 84 cents to the dollar to Vermont men, this law will help bridge the gap."

Members of a diverse stakeholders group facilitated by the Attorney General's office have been meeting since August of 2012, following an equal pay conference hosted by the ATG and the EEOC in June. The stakeholders group discussed and debated the issues in this bill. Committee members included representatives from state government, business, law, and labor, economists, legislators and advocacy groups. Attorney General Sorrell's response to the new law is that "it's good for Vermont to be a leader in efforts to see that women in the workforce are afforded the equal respect and the equal pay they deserve."

Cary Brown, the Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women, and a member of the equal pay committee observed, "This law provides a wealth of tools for addressing inequities in pay and working conditions, and is a huge benefit to working families in Vermont. It strengthens and clarifies existing laws ensuring equal pay for equal work, increases the accountability of state contractors, and creates new protections for workers who discuss wages. This law makes Vermont the first state in the country to guarantee employees' right to request flexible working arrangements, supporting both men's and women's participation in work and family responsibilities."

Committee member Karen Richards, Executive Director of the Vermont Human Rights Commission, spoke about the new law in the context of state government employment. "The new Equal Pay Act language tying the defense of 'a factor other than sex' to proof that the factor does not perpetuate a sex-based differential in pay and is job-related will provide Vermont women with stronger tools for enforcing the right to equal pay for equal work. I hope the Administration's support of this legislation

will translate into meaningful action to both review and correct existing pay inequities between men and women in comparable positions in state government.”

UVM Professor of Economics and Women's Studies and committee member, Elaine McCrate, remarked, "With the passage of this bill, Vermont is addressing the 21st century reality that few families have full-time caregivers at home, and that workplaces need to accommodate family needs to some extent. [Vermont](#) workers will have the right to request flexible working arrangements, and they will be able to expect their employers to consider them seriously. In addition Vermont will begin to explore the possibility of paid parental leave. This puts Vermont at the forefront of work-family and pay equity initiatives in the US."

State agencies, including the Attorney General's office, the Human Rights Commission and the Vermont Commission on Women, will be working together on a public information campaign targeted at workers and employers to let them know about the new law's provisions.

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The Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) is a non-partisan state commission charged with reducing discrimination and encouraging opportunities for women. Sixteen volunteer commissioners and an advisory board of representatives from organizations concerned with women's issues guide the VCW's public education, coalition building, and advocacy efforts. VCW offers many services to the public, including an information and referral service at 800-881-1561 and many publications, including the handbook [The Legal Rights of Women in Vermont](#). For more information, visit women.vermont.gov.