

## Idaho has an Equal Pay Day, not equal pay

Jim Fisher  
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Can anyone believe that women are paid an average of only 60 cents for every \$1 a man is paid for equal work?

OK, that is the average for Idaho - not the most enlightened of states - so maybe it isn't so hard to comprehend. But nationwide, women are making 78 cents for every \$1 paid a man, according to 2007 figures, and that's still nowhere near good enough.

It's also illegal, and has been since Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of 1963. But considering some recent actions on the equal pay front, maybe we shouldn't be surprised the law is broken as commonly as it apparently is.

First was the U.S. Supreme Court's 2007 decision that Lilly Ledbetter, who discovered before leaving her career as a supervisor for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. she was paid \$6,000 a year less than male supervisors, could not rightfully sue for damages. In a 5-4 ruling, the court said Ledbetter should have filed her suit within 18 months of the first discriminatory paycheck, even though she did not learn of the discrimination until years later.

The court's majority not surprisingly comprised five male justices: John Roberts, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Anthony Kennedy and Samuel Alito.

The next year, when some in Congress set out to make clear the 18-month deadline did not apply to women kept in the dark about their situation, Senate Republicans blocked a vote on the bill named after Ledbetter. Although Democratic presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both returned from their campaigns to Washington to vote yes, GOP candidate John McCain skipped the vote, saying he would have voted no.

Why? The law would lead to too many lawsuits, McCain said.

It wasn't until this year the law passed both chambers, and was signed into law by President Obama.

The attention the new law received might help women in Idaho and the nation's other states with the greatest disparity between men's and women's pay - Utah, Wyoming and Louisiana - realize they are not powerless in the face of discrimination. And toward that end, a resolution just approved by the Idaho Legislature won't hurt either.

The resolution - co-sponsored by Reps. Anne Pasley-Stuart, D-Boise, and Donna Boe, D-Pocatello, and Sen. Les Bock, D-Boise - makes April 28, which fell Tuesday, Equal Pay Day in the Gem State. The move is symbolic only, but as designations of Martin Luther King Day around the nation demonstrated, symbols do matter.

Just ask Goodyear Tire and Rubber. Its now notorious maltreatment of Lilly Ledbetter is the kind of public relations nightmare no employer would welcome. If Idaho's Equal Pay Day reminds just one employer of that, it will serve a good purpose. - J.F.