



## **The Same Work is Worth the Same Wage**

by Rep. Jonathan Brostoff

Today is Equal Pay Day, a day to reflect on the appalling fact that in Wisconsin women earn 79 cents for each dollar men earn when working the same job. Equal Pay Day, always a Tuesday in April, symbolizes at what point in the year a woman's earnings equal that of her male counterpart's annual wage of the previous year.

The pay gap between women and men has been shown to be a constant issue regardless of the educational level of the workers. Since the initiation of the Fair Pay Act of 1963, there has been a continual decrease in the pay gap, however, its pace is so slow that wage parity will not be reached until 2133. To make matters worse, the pay gap for women of color is even wider. For every dollar earned by a white man, Asian women are paid 65 cents, African American women are paid 61 cents, and Hispanic women are paid a mere 53 cents.

Nearly half of Wisconsin households are headed by women, 31 percent of which exist below the poverty line.

In 2009, Wisconsin's Equal Pay Enforcement Act took effect, increasing access for women to press charges when their rights were violated. Within one year of the law's inception, Wisconsin jumped up 12 places from 36<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in the nation's gender/wage parity rankings. Additionally, hardworking Wisconsin women saw their median earnings rise three percent. Despite these accomplishments, just a few years later every Republican legislator in Wisconsin voted to repeal the Equal Pay Enforcement Act. Every Democratic legislator in the state voted against the repeal, but they were, unfortunately, outnumbered and Governor Walker signed the repeal into law.

Earlier this session, I co-sponsored Senate Bill 145, which would have reinstated Wisconsin's Equal Pay Enforcement Act. It defies logic that the Republican-led Legislature failed to pass this bill before session ended - without even giving it a public hearing - when the wage gap results in Wisconsin women earning an average of \$10,000 less per year than her male peers. By ignoring this issue, Wisconsin's economy also suffers by being deprived of an additional \$8 billion annually. My Democratic colleagues and I will continue to fight for what is right and fair, including bringing back the Equal Pay Enforcement Act, and doing more to close the wage gap for good. Wisconsin families and our economy depend on it.

OFFICE: State Capitol, P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708 ★ PHONE: (608) 266-0650

TOLL-FREE: (888) 534-0019 ★ E-MAIL: Rep.Brostoff@legis.wisconsin.gov ★ WEB: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/assembly/19/brostoff>