

CLUW Fact Sheet: The Importance of the Employee Free Choice Act to Women

- Equal pay has been the law since 1963. But today, 46 years later, women are still paid less than men—even when we have similar education, skills and experience.
- The typical full-time woman worker does not make as much as the typical man in any state. At the present rate of progress, it will take 50 years to close the wage gap nationwide.
- Census statistics released on Women's Equality Day (August 26, 2008) show that the gap between men's and women's earnings changed by less than one percent from 2006 to 2007, narrowing only slightly from 76.9 to 77.8 percent.
- Median earnings for women of color are generally even lower, and all showed percentage drops in the last year.
- In 2007, the earnings for African American women were 68.7 percent of men's earnings, a drop of more than 3 percent.
- Asian American women's earnings were 89.5 percent of men's earnings, a drop of 3.5 percent.
- Latinas earnings were 59 percent of men's, a drop of .6 percent.
- Over a lifetime of work this loss adds up. According to the AFL-CIO's Department of Professional Employees, on average the families of working women lose out on \$9,575 per year because of the earnings gap.
- And because we're paid less now, we have less to save for our futures and we'll earn smaller pensions than men.
- Women represent 58% of all Social Security beneficiaries age 62 and older and approximately 70% of beneficiaries age 85 and older.
- In 2005, the average Social Security retirement benefit was 32% smaller for women than men. 72.3% of women receive a monthly benefit of under \$1,000 while 67.8% of men receive more than \$1,000 per month.
- Only 29.2% of women 65 and older received any form of pension or annuity income and the median amount was \$6,420. For men, 43.8% received pensions or annuity income and the median amount was \$12,000.
- At a time when America's economy is facing a downturn, every penny counts!
- According to the AFL-CIO, working families lose \$200 billion annually due to the wage gap.
- Economist Evelyn Murphy, president and founder of The WAGE Project, estimates that the wage gap costs the average American full-time woman worker between \$700,000 and \$2 million over the course of her lifetime.

- According to AFL-CIO compiled data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2008, on average unionization raised women's wages by 32% compared to non-union women.
- A recent study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research found that for the years 2004-2007 unionized women were much more likely to have health insurance (75.4%) and a pension (75.8%) than women workers who were not in unions (50.9% for health insurance, 43% for pensions).
- According to the AFL-CIO most unionized employees are in defined pension plans. (Defined-benefit plans are federally insured and provide a guaranteed monthly pension amount. They are better for workers than defined-contribution plans, in which the balance in a worker's account fluctuates depending on how well the underlying investments perform, and the monthly payment amount is uncertain.) The 2008 Bureau of Labor Statistics data demonstrates a distinct advantage for unionized employees concerning pensions. Although not separated by gender, 77% of unionized employees participate in defined pension plans vs. 20% of non-unionized employees.
- According to American Rights at Work, unions helped pass legislation that is important to working families, including:
 - The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 which allows employees to take unpaid leave during serious medical conditions or to care for sick family members or new children
 - The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 outlawing discrimination against workers on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions
- Unions increase workers' access to childcare by creating childcare centers in the workplace, lobbying for childcare subsidies and providing workers with childcare benefits through collective bargaining agreements
- Unions provide workers with job security when they need to respond to family care emergencies.
- Unions give workers the right to alternative work arrangements such as flexible hours and telecommuting which allows workers to balance family and childcare needs.
- Union members receive 14% more paid time off than non-union employees.
- Unions defend the rights of women in the workplace by fighting discrimination and working for wage equality.
- In 2007, women made up 45 percent of union members and if they continue to grow at the rate of the last 25 years, women will be the majority of the unionized workforce by 2020.

All the more reason that the Employee Free Choice Act is important to women

