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### **STATEMENT BY SENATOR KENNEDY ON EQUAL PAY DAY**

Today, is Equal Pay Day, which means that 115 days into 2006, an average American woman will finally have earned enough in 2005 and 2006 together to equal what a man doing similar work earned by the end of 2005. Equal Pay Day is a sad reminder that gender discrimination is still very much a part of our country.

In America today, women earn only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. The wage gap exists in every segment of our society. Women of every race and national origin earn less than their male counterparts. African American women earn just 68 percent of the average earnings of African American men. Latinas earn only 57 percent of the average Latino male wage. Asian American women earn 88 cents for every dollar earned by Asian American men.[S1]

This is not a problem just for poor women or rich women. It cuts across all occupations. There are even wage gaps in the operating room. The average male physician or surgeon makes \$52,000 more a year than the average female physician. In the board room, the average male CEO makes \$35,000 more a year than his female counterpart.[S2]

There are wage gaps in the classroom. The average male teaching assistant earns \$5,000 more a year than the average female. In the dining room, the average male cook makes \$2,000 more than his female counterpart.[S3]

The problem is not getting better. This year's wage gap of 23 cents is the same gap that existed in 2002[S4] . Since 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was passed, the wage gap has narrowed by less than half of a penny a year.[S5]

The wage gap is caused in part by how society deals with the realities of working women's lives, such as time out from the workforce to have children and care for family members. Among working women, nearly two-thirds do not receive paid maternity leave when they give birth; a quarter have to quit their jobs to care for their children, and doing so permanently lowers their future earning potential. It's wrong to dismiss the pay gap as a consequence of women's choosing to take time out of the workforce. Women do not willingly choose to forego fair pay in order to have children and care for elderly parents, nor should they.

More important, we cannot blame the pay gap exclusively on women's predominant role in childcare. The evidence shows that actual *gender discrimination* also accounts for the disparity between men and women's pay. In 2004, the Census Bureau concluded that the substantial gap in earnings between men and women could not completely be explained by differences in education, tenure in the workforce, or occupation.[S6] <#\_msocom\_6> Similarly, a recent General Accounting Office report concluded that the difference in men and women's working patterns do not explain the entire disparity in their wages.[S7] Discrimination plays a role as well, and we need to combat it with federal legislation to close the gap. Congress needs to act. I strongly support Senator Clinton's Paycheck Fairness Act and Senator Harkin's Fair Pay Act to prevent and remedy gender pay discrimination. It's appalling and unacceptable that such discrimination still exists in America. The issue is simple fairness. I urge my colleagues to stand up for working women and end wage discrimination by passing the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act.

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[S1] [www.pay-equity.org](http://www.pay-equity.org) <<http://www.pay-equity.org/>> , “Wage Gap Remains”, National Committee on Pay Equity

[S2] U.S. Census Bureau, Evidence from Census 2000 about Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women, Table 5

[S3] U.S. Census Bureau, Evidence from Census 2000 about Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women, Table 6

[S4] [www.pay-equity.org](http://www.pay-equity.org) <<http://www.pay-equity.org/>> , “Wage Gap Remains”, National Committee on Pay Equity

[S5] [www..now.org/issues/economic/factsheet.html](http://www.now.org/issues/economic/factsheet.html) “Facts about Pay Equity”

[S6] U.S. Census Bureau, Evidence from Census 2000 about Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women, p.21.

[S7] U.S. General Accounting Office, “Women’s Earnings: Work Patterns Partially Explain Difference Between Men’s and Women’s Earnings,” GAO-04-35, October 2003, p.2