



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Urges Albany to Act on NYS Fair Pay Act, Calls for Stronger Protections for Women and Minorities in Workforce

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY November 1, 2012

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Pay equity a top issue in presidential race, but should be addressed at state level

Kennedy says closing wage gap between genders would significantly stimulate economic growth; pushes for critical measure to end wage discrimination

BUFFALO, N.Y. – While the issues of wage discrimination and fair pay have been in sharp focus during this year’s presidential campaign, New York State can take action within the walls of its own State Capitol to start bridging the wage gap among genders. That’s why

Senator Tim Kennedy, the top Democrat on the Senate Economic Development Committee, called on Albany to finally approve the New York State Fair Pay Act.

Kennedy says closing the wage gap and ensuring equal pay for equal work would help jumpstart the economy and **stimulate significant growth** in New York State and across the nation. The national economy would grow by three to four percent if the wage gap were closed and all workers were paid fairly and equitably, according to estimates from the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

"Of all the legislation still remaining to be addressed this year, the Fair Pay Act should be at the top of the list for any potential Special Session," said Senator Kennedy. "In a nation and state built upon a foundation of fairness and equality for all, it's unconscionable that people still endure wage discrimination based upon gender, race or nation of origin. By passing the Fair Pay Act, we'll make New York State a national leader for equal pay, improve protections for women and minorities in the workforce and stimulate economic growth across our state."

At a **Skyview Learning Group** job-readiness class Thursday at **Crucial Human Services** in Buffalo, Kennedy stressed the need to ensure all workers are paid fairly and equitably, especially after they are geared with the skills they need to secure high-paying jobs.

In outlining the necessity of this common-sense, wage-protection measure, Kennedy outlined a series of **eye-opening statistics**. Women in New York State are paid roughly 83 cents to every dollar earned by a man – nationally, it's 77 cents. For minority women, the gap is even larger – African American women were paid 66 cents and Hispanic women 55 cents, to every dollar paid to a man. Also, about 15 percent of New York women earn incomes at or below the poverty threshold – 28 states have less female poverty than New York State.

"Single mothers endure especially inequitable conditions – **42 percent of single mother families are stuck in poverty** and 22 percent suffer extreme poverty," Kennedy said. "By

ensuring fair and equal pay for women, we will help lift entire families out of poverty.”

The New York State Fair Pay Act ([S2200A](#)) targets wage disparities between women and men and between minorities and non-minorities in the same jobs and in jobs that are dissimilar but require equal levels of effort, responsibility, skill and working conditions. This legislation ends wage discrimination, ensures pay equity and protects workers from retaliation when they discuss potential disparities among salaries. It requires the state Department of Labor to promulgate guidelines to help employers maintain pay equity between both male and female employees and between minority and non-minority employees.

Buffalo Councilwoman Bonnie Russell, local advocates, business leaders, educators and students stood with Senator Kennedy Thursday to raise the volume on the urgent call for fair pay for all.

“The WNY Women’s Foundation is proud to stand with Senator Kennedy to support this important legislation,” said **Heather Filipowicz, Executive Director of the WNY Women’s Foundation**. “Fair pay for women is not just a women’s issue, but a family issue. Unequal pay for women keeps families and children in poverty and hurts the middle class. The Fair Pay Act will give women economic independence and generate family sustaining jobs for all New Yorkers.”

“As a woman in the construction industry, I know the challenges women often face in male-dominated career fields,” said **Shandra Spicer of S&W Contracting**. “I also know the huge economic impact Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises have on our economy. I am happy that Senator Kennedy also understands these challenges and is advancing legislation that will ensure that women and minorities are paid fairly and equally for their contributions.”

“Over the years, Skyview has worked with many single mothers – we know firsthand the positive impact of a fair paycheck earned by these women for their entire family,” said **Orlando Perez, Principal of Skyview Learning Group**. “The issue of fair pay and gender equality raises up not only families in Western New York, but our entire community. We proudly stand by Senator Kennedy and the others gathered here today to support this issue.”

This legislation has been approved in the Assembly in the past. Senator Kennedy and fellow Democrats in the Senate have been pushing for the Fair Pay Act to finally be brought to the floor for a vote. Kennedy wants this measure taken up as soon as possible, especially if the State Legislature is called back for a Special Session.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.