in our Federal laws, which makes the legislation we are considering here today unnecessary and redundant.

Additionally, it seems the premise for bringing this bill to the floor today is in response to potential wage gaps between men and women in the workforce. I would remind my colleagues that research into this issue, including a report by the Government Accountability Office, GAO, concluded that the ''wage gap'' was not simply derived from sex discrimination or pay discrimination. In fact, the reasons for such a gap can be numerous.

But to the bill itself, I am concerned that this legislation will not strengthen current laws or improve workplace protections but rather create additional and greater potential for individuals, well-meaning or otherwise, to abuse these protections in our courts.

This bill does two very damaging things to current law. It allows for unlimited compensatory and punitive damages for claims brought under the Equal Pay Act, and it does not require proof of intent to discriminate in those claims. These two components could have unintended consequences for employers and employees, and they make it more attractive for unsubstantiated claims before the courts.

I welcome a healthy debate on employee and employer protections in the workplace. In fact, I would hope that before going forward, the debate on these issues would be more open where both the minority and majority might have greater opportunity to offer amendments to strengthen legislation and address the real concern of America's hardworking families.

I want to thank Ranking Member BUCK MCKEON for his leadership, and I encourage my colleagues to oppose this legislation. American workers deserve reasonable protections that are enforced. This bill would undermine those efforts in America's workforce.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. WOOLSEY) having assumed the chair, Mr. CAPUANO, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1338) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

PERMISSION TO REDUCE TIME FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DURING FURTHER PROCEEDINGS TODAY

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that, during further proceedings today in the House and in a Committee of the Whole, the Chair be authorized to reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any question that otherwise could be subjected to 5-minute voting under clause 8 or 9 of rule XX or under clause 6 of rule XVIII.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1388 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1338.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1338) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes, with Mr. CAPUANO in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, 43½ minutes remain in general debate. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ) has 23 minutes remaining. And the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) has 20½ minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, at this time I would like to recognize a true champion of women in the House and the author of the Paycheck Fairness Act, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. Rosa DeLauro), for 6 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I want to thank Chairman GEORGE MILLER for his dedication to this cause. We never could have come this far without his tenacious leadership.

We are grateful, Chairman MILLER.

Mr. Chairman, the Paycheck Fairness Act is about valuing the work that women do in our society. One of our Nation's most enduring principles, one of our greatest aspirations, has been ensuring equality of opportunity for all. There is no more important American promise that allows us to be a country of dreams and of success, and today we can take another important step toward finally honoring that promise.

I want to thank Speaker PELOSI, whose leadership today continues to build on the legacy of those who preceded us, those pioneers at Seneca Falls as well as the women who blazed a path in the House of Representatives, Jeanette Rankin, Mary Norton. Even President Kennedy's Equal Pay Act grew out of the Commission on the Status of Women led by Eleanor Roosevelt. Forty-five years later our Speaker has celebrated that history by making this movement an absolute priority. Her message has been clear: It is time to stand up for working women and their families.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we can do that today by supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act, reasserting the principle that women and men should be paid the same when doing the same work and making it real by allowing female employees to sue for compensatory and punitive damages. It does so without imposing the arbitrary caps women face under title VII. It protects employees from retaliation for sharing information with their coworkers about their salary, with some exceptions. And it establishes a grant initiative to provide negotiation skills training programs for girls and women.

Some will have you believe that the wage gap for women is a myth, that we already have laws in place to make discrimination on the basis of gender illegal. But just because something is illegal does not mean that it does not continue to happen. According to the Department of Labor, women still earn only 77 percent of what men earn.

Opponents insist that this figure does not take into account education and experience. But the truth is the gap barely closes among women with college degrees. Recent research by the American Association of University Women found that just one year after college graduation, women earn only 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn. Ten years after college graduation, women fall further behind, earning only 69 percent of what men earn. So what is the message? No matter how advanced their degree or how hard they work, women will not be compensated fairly.

The marketplace alone will not correct this injustice. We need a solution in law, just as our country has done in the past to bring down discriminatory barriers. Others will insist that we cannot open the door for increased litigation, but in the light of day, it is clear that the current system is rife with loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid responsibility for discriminatory pay scales.

We all know Lilly Ledbetter's story. For so many years she was shortchanged by her employer. And years later she was shortchanged again by the Supreme Court ruling of 5–4 against her discrimination claim, drastically limiting women's access to seek justice for pay discrimination based on gender.

We have an obligation to ensure that this does not go on any longer, and we must begin today by toughening remedies in the Equal Pay Act to give America's working women the opportunity to fight against wage discrimination and receive the paycheck they have earned. No one should be forced to consider a trade-off between a full wage, a family life, and a good job.