



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014

No. 57

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, today make our lawmakers instruments of Your grace and goodness. Teach them how to be patient with themselves and each other. Forgive them when they permit impatience to lead them astray, preventing them from seeing the wonder and majesty of Your purpose for our Nation and world. Lord, renew in them the joy of belonging to You as they yield their hearts to You in trust and love. May no duty be left undone and no constructive words be left unsaid.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT— MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 345, S. 2199, the Paycheck Fairness Act.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 345, S. 2199, a bill 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in morning business until 12:30 p.m., with the time equally divided and controlled. The Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. for our weekly caucus meetings, as we always do on Tuesdays.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 2575

Mr. President, I understand that H.R. 2575 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2575) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the 30-hour threshold for classification of a full-time employee for purposes of the employer mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and replace it with 40 hours.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

EQUAL PAY DAY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Ralph Waldo Emerson said this: "America is another name for opportunity."

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Today this body, the Senate, should put Emerson's words to the test as we turn attention to the question of equal pay. For working American women, millions of whom are primary wage earners for their families, the Paycheck Fairness Act represents a unique opportunity, a chance to better provide for themselves and their families.

It is unconscionable that American women currently take home an average of 77 cents for every dollar their male colleagues earn for doing the exact same work. Wage disparity is true regardless of whether a woman has a college degree, what job she holds or how many hours she spends at the office or factory or wherever it might be.

Consider this just for a brief moment: For a woman to make the same salary as a man in 1 year for doing similar work in America, she must work not only that year but also an additional 3 months and 8 days. That is why today, April 8, the eighth day of the fourth month, is Equal Pay Day. It represents the extra work American women have to put forth to provide for their families. This is an injustice and should not be permitted to take place in America. While President Obama and Democrats have made significant progress toward helping women achieve equal pay, there is still much for us to do.

Five years ago the very first law President Obama ever signed, the first act he performed in the Oval Office, was to sign the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Remember, this is the legislation based on the good woman who found out—after having worked at this place for so many years, having additional responsibilities than all the men—they were all getting paid much more than she. She was the boss getting paid less than the people who worked for her. Why? Because she is a woman.

The Lilly Ledbetter legislation is the biggest step Congress has taken on behalf of women to help them with their wages since the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The bill provides that the statute of limitations doesn't begin to run until someone finds out they are being cheated by their employer. The legislation helped address the pay gap, but women still suffer from discriminatory wage disparity.

The Paycheck Fairness Act goes a step further by providing protections for women in the workplace. This legislation addresses unequal wages by empowering women to negotiate for equal pay and giving employers incentives to obey current law.

I was happy to hear all the news accounts that I was able to be briefed on—along with those I listened to on public radio while I was doing my exercises—the detailed accounts about how

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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