

this legislation any longer. We cannot ignore that the gender wage gap is unacceptably large and shrinking much too slowly. We owe working women of America and their families—more. I look forward to casting my vote to proceed to the Paycheck Fairness Act and urge my colleague to join me.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

FOOD SAFETY

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, first, I thank Senator ENZI for allowing me a couple of seconds here as we move toward a cloture vote on S. 510. I am an original cosponsor of S. 510, the food safety bill. I certainly had hoped that we would be able to come together in a bipartisan way in support of that bill. Unfortunately, the bill, with the substitute that has now been filed, is not the same bill I originally cosponsored. I will speak more about this after the vote, but it is my intent to vote against cloture on this bill.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I want to talk about the paycheck unfairness bill that is before us. A better title for this bill should be the “jobs for trial lawyers act.”

I am confident that there is no Member of this Senate who would tolerate paying a woman less for the same work simply because she is a woman. As husbands, fathers, and mothers of working women, I believe we all recognize the gross inequity of discrimination in pay based on gender. Congress has put two laws on the books to combat such discrimination—Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. These are both good laws that have been well utilized to combat discrimination where it exists, and I support the full enforcement of these laws. Businesses that discriminate against a female employee because of her gender must be corrected and penalized.

But what the majority is trying to push through here today is of a very different nature. The so-called Paycheck Fairness Act is actually a “jobs for trial lawyers act.” The primary beneficiary of this legislation will be trial lawyers. They will be able to bring bigger class action lawsuits—which usually result in coupons for the people that were disadvantaged—without even getting the consent of the plaintiffs, and they will have the weapon of uncapped damages to force employers to settle lawsuits even when they know they have done nothing wrong. The litigation bonanza this bill would create would extend even to the smallest of small businesses, only further hampering our economic recovery.

There are a number of other concerning provisions of this legislation, such as authorizing government to require reporting of every employer’s wage data by sex, race, and national origin. Had this bill gone through committee markup under regular Senate order, we may have been able to address some of these concerns. But this bill—like so many other labor bills in the HELP Committee jurisdiction of this Congress—has circumvented regular order.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of letters from a total of 44 groups opposing this legislation and 4 newspaper op eds.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GROUPS OPPOSING PFA, 11/17/2010

1. Alliance for Worker Freedom; 2. American Bakers Association (coalition letter); 3. American Bankers Association (coalition letter); 4. American Hotel & Lodging Association (coalition letter); 5. Associated Builders and Contractors; 6. Associated General Contractors (coalition letter); 7. Associated Industries of Massachusetts; 8. Coalition of Franchisee Associations; 9. College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (coalition letter); 10. Concerned Women for America; 11. Food Marketing Institute; 12. HR Policy Association (coalition letter); 13. Independent Electrical Contractors; 14. Indiana Restaurant Association; 15. International Franchise Association; 16. International Foodservice Distributors Association (coalition letter); 17. International Public Management Association for Human Resources (coalition letter); 18. Louisiana Restaurant Association; 19. Maine Restaurant Association; 20. Montana Restaurant Association.

21. National Association of Manufacturers; 22. National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors (coalition letter); 23. National Council of Chain Restaurants (coalition letter); 24. National Council of Textile Organizations (coalition letter); 25. National Federation of Independent Business (coalition letter); 26. National Public Employer Labor Relations Association (coalition letter); 27. National Restaurant Association; 28. National Retail Federation; 29. National Roofing Contractors Association (coalition letter); 30. National Small Business Association; 31. National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (coalition letter); 32. Nebraska Restaurant Association; 33. North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association; 34. Ohio Restaurant Association; 35. Printing Industries of America (coalition letter); 36. Retail Industry Leaders Association; 37. Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council (coalition letter); 38. Society for Human Resource Management (coalition letter); 39. Texas Restaurant Association; 40. U.S. Chamber of Commerce; 41. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; 42. Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association; 43. West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association; 44. World At Work (Requires clarification that legit ER practices not covered by PFA).

BILL TAKES ON DISTURBING PAY GAP—BUT OFFERS FLAWED REMEDIES

(November 17, 2010)

All eyes will likely be on U.S. Senator Scott Brown this week as he casts a decisive Senate vote on the Paycheck Fairness Act, a bill aimed at helping women fight for equal pay in the workplace. But while parts of the

bill would be useful, the measure as a whole is too broad a solution to a complex, nuanced problem.

The bill is meant to address a troublesome wage gap between women and men, which has decreased over time, but still persists; today, most women earn roughly 77 cents for every dollar earned by men in equivalent jobs. The reasons for this discrepancy are under dispute, and the Paycheck Fairness Act would take some steps to protect against blatant discrimination. Most notably, it would bar businesses from retaliating against employees who share information about their salaries with their coworkers. The bill would also provide funds to train businesses to improve their pay practices and train women to negotiate their salaries more effectively.

But the controversial meat of the bill is the changes it would make to the legal process, amending the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Where women today can only sue for back pay, the new bill would allow them to seek both compensatory damages and unlimited punitive damages. The bill would also make it easier for workers to join class-action suits. Most problematically, it would alter the burden on businesses, requiring them to prove that any difference in pay is the result of a business necessity, and to demonstrate why they didn’t adopt a plaintiff’s suggested “alternative remedy” that wouldn’t result in a pay gap.

But what if a company offers a higher salary for retail workers in a more dangerous location, and more men sign up? What if a male worker leverages a job offer into a higher salary? Should these be illegal acts? The bill would create too strong a presumption in favor of discrimination over other, equally plausible explanations for disparities in salaries. In addition, the threat of much higher damage awards by juries might lead businesses to make quick settlements for frivolous claims. (Today, about 60 percent of discrimination claims tracked by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are found to have no merit.)

Proponents of the bill note that today’s penalties for wage discrimination are so anemic that there’s no incentive for businesses that discriminate to change their ways. A narrower bill that would stiffen some penalties and ban retaliation would be helpful. But companies are right to be concerned that this bill, as written, is too deep an intrusion.

[From the Chicago Tribune, Nov. 12, 2010]

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS?

Equal pay for equal work stands as a cornerstone of the American workplace, and we support the principle wholeheartedly. But Congress is moving toward a fix that would be grossly intrusive on decision-making by private businesses.

At least one group would get a fatter paycheck from the Paycheck Fairness Act: trial lawyers.

The proposed law says that in cases where a pay disparity between men and women is challenged in court, an employer would have to prove there is some reason for the gap other than discrimination. The employer would also have to prove that the gap serves a necessary business purpose. And even then, the employer could be in trouble if a court determines that an “alternative employment practice” would serve the same purpose without skewing the salaries.

Those judgment calls go by another name: management decisions. The legislation would open businesses to wide second-guessing of decisions they made to hire and promote the most effective work force in a competitive environment. It would leave businesses with one eye on the competition and one eye on what a judge might decide in