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- NEWS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ URGES CT BUSINESSES TO REVIEW PRACTICES TO ENSURE EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN

WOMEN LEADERS SAYS EQUAL PAY DAY – APRIL 24TH – SHOULD BE ‘WAKE-UP CALL’
FOR CONNECTICUT – WHICH RANKS IN BOTTOM THIRD OF STATES FOR LARGEST WAGE
GAP

Hartford: On National Equal Pay Day Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, Connecticut’s chief business registrar, Teresa Younger, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, State Sen. Edith Prague, and Rosemary Dempsey, Executive Director of CT NOW, are urging all Connecticut businesses to review their practices to ensure that women and men are being fairly compensated.

According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, women make 77 cents for every dollar that men earn. In Connecticut, the gap is even bigger. **The Institute reports that Connecticut is ranked in the bottom third of the states when it comes to wage discrimination.** Another report from the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation ranks Connecticut 40th and estimates that women in this state earn just 71 cents for every dollar earned by men. According to Women Work! The National Network for Women’s Employment, the wage gap exists despite differences in education, “Women with a Master’s actually earn \$4,765 less than men with a Bachelor’s.”

Equal Pay Day is observed each year in April to raise awareness about the nation's pay gap. April is a significant month, as it indicates how far into each year a woman must work to earn as much as a man earned in the previous year.

“Connecticut women are being underpaid and undervalued,” said Bysiewicz. “The wage gap in this state, on average, costs a working woman between \$700,000 and \$2 million over the course of her career. This inequity hurts families, stifles small and minority business growth, and damages our state's overall competitiveness.”

As part of her effort to call attention to Connecticut's wage gap, Bysiewicz is posting a message to businesses on the Secretary of the State's CONCORD application site (www.concord-sots.ct.gov), which receives more than 700,000 visits from businesses, entrepreneurs, and members of the general public each month. The message urges businesses to review hiring and payroll practices and make sure all policies are compliant with the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

Younger, of Connecticut's PCSW, points out that, “At the current rate, equal pay for women will not be realized until the year 2057, and even longer for women of color.” She states, “It's time to compensate women for their worth.”

Dempsey, Executive Director of CT NOW, said, “Connecticut is a leader in so many progressive practices and policies for women and our families; however, the ‘bread and butter’ issue of wage equity is key to retaining the considerable contributions to the economy made by the hardworking women of this state.”

“There is absolutely no reason for women to be denied the same pay as men based solely upon gender – we need a renewed effort to erase any institutionalized bias that perpetuates it,” Senator Prague said. “This is no longer a man's world; women have proven themselves time and time again at every level of responsibility and compensation.”

“Connecticut's former Governor Abe Ribicoff once said words to the effect of ‘When you want a job done right you get a woman to do it,’” Senator Prague added. “He had the right idea then and it's the right idea still, that when women are capable of doing a job they should be compensated accordingly.”

“Women account for 49% of Connecticut's working population. Of that figure, 34.9% of Connecticut women are employed in professional and technical occupations yet they continue to earn less than their male counterparts,” said Connecticut Department of Labor Commissioner Patricia H. Mayfield. “In those occupations traditionally held by women, such as registered nurses, social workers and clerical support, male worker salaries still dominate. It is important for women to continue to enter fields that require math and science skills in order to compete for higher salaries, better jobs, and equal pay.”

It should be noted that the Institute for Women's Policy Research lists Connecticut as having one of the best overall economies for women, based largely on their median annual earnings. In addition, statistics from the Center for Women's Business and Research show that the number of private businesses owned by women in Connecticut has increased 46.3% in the last ten years.

Still, wage discrimination remains a problem. According to Women Work! and its 2007 report, *Fighting the Wage Gap*, there are various forms of discrimination that women face in the workplace that contribute to the wage gap: “Discrimination occurs when women are paid less because they are not considered ‘primary breadwinners;’ hired less frequently in high-wage

establishments; given fewer training and mentoring opportunities than other workers; and given smaller benefits and pension packages than their male counterparts.” The report also says employees in “women’s” jobs are often paid less than those in “men’s” jobs that require similar skill, effort, and responsibility.

In an effort to close the pay gap, Bysiewicz, Younger, Prague, and Dempsey are:

- Urging Congress to pass and President Bush to sign the Paycheck Fairness Act, introduced by U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro of New Haven, and the Fair Pay Act.
- Writing to President Bush and members of Congress to ask that budget cuts to the Women’s Bureau of the Dept. of Labor be restored. The Bureau is the only federal agency devoted to the concerns of women in the workplace. Despite this, since 2006 President Bush has attempted to outsource half its staff.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro has helped secure the first-ever Congressional hearing focused on the pay gap. “Even though the Equal Pay Act was enacted more than 40 years ago, women still only make 76% of what men make. Pay equity is more than a women’s issue. It is a financial issue for families and a matter of values – ensuring hard work is honored and rewarded in America. That is why I am pleased that this year we mark Equal Pay Day with the first-ever Congressional hearing focused on the effects of the pay gap and a legislative remedy, the Paycheck Fairness Act. I would also like to commend Connecticut’s leaders who are working at the state level to address this issue. The marketplace alone will not correct this injustice – we need a legislative solution,” said Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (Conn. – 3).

DeLauro, who has worked to eliminate the wage gap for the past decade, introduced the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 1338), which would take critical steps to empower women to seek equal pay, create strong incentives for employers to obey the laws that are in place, and strengthen federal outreach and enforcement efforts.

The National Committee on Pay Equity has described each piece of pending legislation as follows:

“**The Fair Pay Act** was introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) on April 11, 2007. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) will introduce the bill in the House. It seeks to end wage discrimination against those who work in female-dominated or minority-dominated jobs by establishing equal pay for equivalent work. For example, within individual companies, employers could not pay jobs that are held predominately by women less than jobs held predominately by men if those jobs are equivalent in value to the employer. The bill also protects workers on the basis of race or national origin. The Fair Pay Act makes exceptions for different wage rates based on seniority, merit, or quantity or quality of work. It also contains a small business exemption.”

“**The Paycheck Fairness Act** (H.R. 1338 and S.766) was introduced March 6, 2007 by Sen. Hillary Clinton and Rep. Rosa DeLauro to strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The bill expands damages under the Equal Pay Act and amends its very broad fourth affirmative defense. In addition, the Paycheck Fairness Act calls for a study of data collected by the EEOC and proposes voluntary guidelines to show employers how to evaluate jobs with the goal of eliminating unfair disparities.”

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