



NYSPEC
c/o LIFWG
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New York State Comparable Worth History

The State of New York agreed in 1986 to a one-time-only funding pool to cover *equal pay for job titles of comparable worth* adjustments for state employees. The cost was one percent of the payroll in 1986-87 and 1987-88. The result was higher salary grades for 233 job titles with over 47,000 employees receiving raises. Most were women and/or people of color but roughly 20 percent were white males. Some received adjustments of three or four grades for annual increments greater than \$4000, proving that equal-pay for job titles of *comparable worth is worth it*.

This took place 20 years ago as part of the negotiated union contracts. But no legislation was ever passed. So there has been no legal pressure to establish equal pay for job-titles of comparable value or maintain it. Like the State, some cities and counties also addressed pay equity for job titles of comparable value historically. But there has been no protection for private sector employees and no *requirement* to establish and maintain job-title pay equity in the public sector.

International Perspective

Much of the rest of the western world has enacted legislation putting this reform in place. Note that, just across New York State's northern border, the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec (where two-thirds of the Canadian population resides) require that salaries be established using gender-neutral job evaluation systems in both the public and private sectors. **U. S. companies that are providing equal pay for job titles of comparable worth for their Canadian employees are free to discriminate against their NY State employees.**

About the Legislation

The NYS Fair Pay Act is strongly written enforceable legislation which provides for equal pay for job titles of comparable worth in both the public and private sectors. It provides that all those employed in NYS in job titles where women and people of color predominate receive equal pay for work of equal value. It also provides NYS employees with freedom of speech regarding their salaries. Research studies have shown that making pay equity adjustments can dramatically decrease the *incidence of poverty* as well as address the wage gaps related to gender and race.

A Brief Legislative History

The NYS Fair Pay Bill has passed in the Assembly each year since 2002 with bi-partisan support. In 2008 it was passed by the Assembly on March 10. We thank Assembly member Susan John for her sponsorship and active advocacy and Speaker Silver and the Assembly members. The support of the Republican majority in the Senate has been non-existent although we have met on occasion with those who chair the Labor Committee (where the Fair Pay Bill is held captive) and with staff from Senator Bruno's office.

In 2007, Senator Craig Johnson, a Democrat from Long Island, became our Senate sponsor. Yes, we know that having a minority party sponsor is "the kiss of death," but, after consulting with lobbyists from several of our member organizations, we decided to go for Democratic sponsorship. Our reasoning included the lack of responsiveness of Senate Republicans in previous legislative sessions and our presumption that their lack of support would continue. We still hope for bi-partisan support which will get the NYS Fair Pay Bill out of committee and on to the Senate floor for a vote. **The laws of New York State should make it clear that workers of all races and genders are to be paid fairly in our state.**