

WASHINGTON, DC – Rep. Mike Honda, Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), released the following statement as the U.S. House of Representatives prepared to vote on the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and The Fair Paycheck Act.

“Every day, despite the Equal Pay Act of 1963, millions of American women are denied equal pay for performing equal work. In the case of Lilly Ledbetter, the Supreme Court of the United States compounded the indignity of discrimination by ignoring years of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and lower court decisions, narrowly interpreting the law that should have protected her, and denying her the justice she deserved.

“Improvement has come too slowly over the past 45 years, with women’s wages rising from 59 cents for every dollar earned by a man in 1963 to just 77 cents per every dollar earned by a man in 2008. Minority women face even greater disparity – one that grew in the last year instead of shrinking. In 2007, the earnings for African-American women were 68.7 percent of men's earnings, a drop of more than 3 percent; Asian-American women's earnings were 89.5 percent of men's earnings, a drop of 3.5 percent; and Latinas’ earnings were 59 percent of men's, a drop of .6 percent.

“These women are from all walks of life. They calculate our taxes, teach our children, and in California's Fifteenth District – my home district – they are developing the technologies of the future. Our sisters, daughters, and granddaughters deserve better from our country. We have told them that they can do anything, reach for and achieve any dream, and we should ensure that they are justly and equitably compensated for their work.

“Women now comprise 59 percent of the work force, compared to about one-third when the Equal Pay Act was first passed. All working people deserve the same opportunities to succeed professionally and personally. The Lilly Ledbetter and Paycheck Fairness Acts will solidify our commitment to this equality and bring us closer to achieving the ideals of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 by recognizing the long-term and insidious nature of gender-based wage discrimination and closing loopholes in the law that have allowed employers to evade liability.

“Today we vote to end this inequality. As a cosponsor of the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Paycheck Fairness Act, I am pleased that the 111th Congress has moved so quickly to pass these bills to help advance the decades-long struggle for equality in the workplace by women and minorities. I am proud to vote for this legislation and urge my colleagues to do the same.”

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*The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac>.*