

Equal Pay Day: Women protest being 'in the red'

By Jen Rini
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DOVER — Women are tired of playing catch-up in the workforce.

Tuesday marked Equal Pay Day, the date that symbolizes how far into the calendar year women must work to earn what men earned in 2012.

Statistics show that even in 2014, women only make 81 cents for every dollar that men make in the state.

Over the course of a lifetime, women have been slighted over \$400,000.

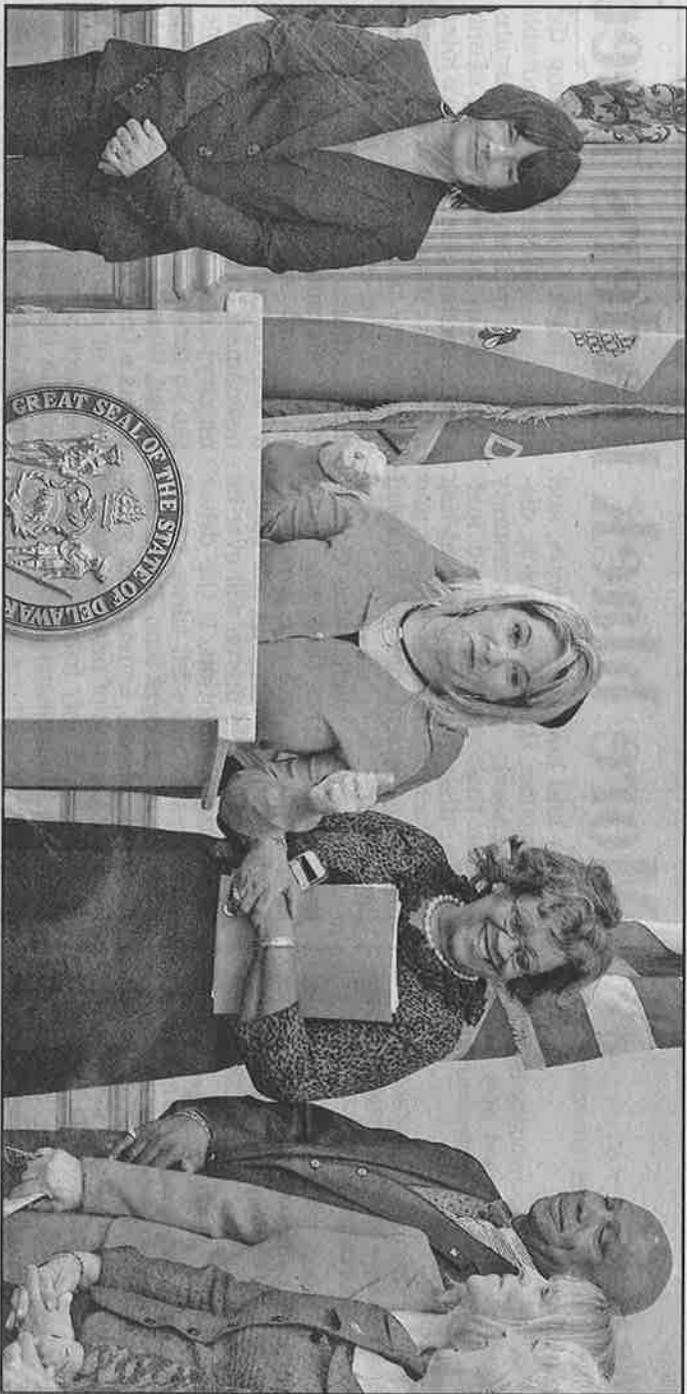
"I want it returned," said Rep. Stephanie T. Bolden, D-Wilmington, during an Equal Pay Day press conference at Legislative Hall Tuesday. Joined by advocates from the Delaware Commission for Women and the American Association of University Women, legislators donned red to symbolize how women and minorities are "in the red" with their pay.

"We are not waging a war against men, this is about equality," said Rosmona Fullman, director of the Delaware Commission for Women.

On a national level, in 2012 women working full-time, year-round made only 77 cents for every dollar that men made — resulting in a wage gap of 23 cents. African-American and Hispanic women working full-time, year-round made only 64 cents and 54 cents respectively for every dollar that non-Hispanic white men made, statistics from the Delaware Commission for Women show.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963, signed by President John F. Kennedy, historically works to end wage disparity based on gender, but there are still certain loopholes that account for inequity.

"The Equal Pay Act is 51 years old and we still [have] a struggle," Ms.



House Majority Leader Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, at podium, joined members of the Delaware Commission for Women (DCW), the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Delaware and state legislators inside the House Hearing Room at Legislative Hall Tuesday afternoon, acknowledging a national day of action against unfair pay called Equal Pay Day. April is symbolic of the point into the new year that a woman must work in order to earn the wages paid to a man in the previous year.

Fullman said, noting that it is an issue that transcends generations.

"The work we do it's necessarily for us," she said. Facilitating outreach on the issue is important, especially on the local level. Teri Guinn Gray, of Newark, said the conversation really exploded when President Obama took office in 2008. More young women, than ever, went to polls to vote and became vocal on women's rights issues, she said.

"We need to have a real candid lesson with our young girls," she said, in order to further change.

In honor of Equal Pay Day, President Obama signed two executive orders, one of which prohibits federal contractors from disciplining employees who discuss their salaries, while the other mandates that the Labor Department collect data on the compensation for federal contract workers, organized by race and sex.

"In 2014, in a nation where women surpass men in earning college degrees, it's simply unacceptable that we are still fighting over the right to equal pay," Delaware's junior Sen. Chris Coons, said in reference to the

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executive action. In a statement Tuesday, he urged lawmakers on The Hill to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will be considered today.

"This bill will give women the tools to fight for the compensation they deserve and help to close the shameful pay gap once and for all. I hope my colleagues in the Senate will join me in voting this week to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and end wage discrimination in our society," he said.

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