Equal Pay:
A Conversation Guide

This toolkit was created and supported by the following organizations:
The demand for action on income inequality has grown demonstrably: This year, close to 40 states will consider raising the minimum wage through legislative action or by ballot; in 25 states, a variety of bills designed to eliminate gender discrimination in pay will be debated; and Congress is scheduled to act on the Paycheck Fairness Act and legislation to raise the national minimum wage.

The intensifying national conversation about wages and growing public demand for an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy, have provided an opportunity to advance the national debate on policies that help women and their families get a head, not just get by.

This Conversation Guide was designed to explain the best ways to engage women and their families in this national discussion. It was informed by a national poll of likely 2014 voters and in-person focus groups with unmarried and married women, Latinas, and millennial men and women—all components of the Rising American Electorate, a group of 115 million eligible voters who are the most likely to benefit from these policies and the least likely to vote.
Talk Their Talk

Connecting with women and their families means meeting them where they live, translating policy and political jargon into language that has meaning for them.
Talk about “equal pay,” not “pay equity” or “fair pay”.

The term “equal pay” best captures the participants’ shared value and belief that no person should be paid less because of who they are. Because “equity” was not a word they used commonly used, we found the term “pay equity” was not as clear or powerful to them as “equal pay.” Participants believed that “fairness” referred to whether a worker is being paid the right amount for the job, not whether men and women are being paid equally.

**FACT:** Women working full time, year round earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. And it’s even less for women of color.

**FACT:** Over the course of a 35 year career, a woman with a college degree will make an average of $1.2 million less than a man with the same level of education.

**FACT:** If women earned equal pay for equal work, our economy could grow, boosting GDP by 2.9 percent or $450 billion.

Know How

**Use the term “gender discrimination in pay,” not “closing the wage gap”**. “Wage gap” sounds more like an income inequality issue (rich versus poor) than a gender issue.
Talk about women and their families, not just women.

These policies provide opportunity for families, not just women. What truly matters to voters right now is the success of their entire family. This is not about “giving” women special treatment, but rather ensuring that their own hard work is enough to get ahead.

“Too many of us are working harder than ever just to keep up. But one of the most effective ways to help families get ahead, weather the ups and downs of the economy, and set our kids up for success is to make sure women earn equal pay for equal work.”

“We’ve all got a stake in ending gender discrimination in pay. Women make up about half of our workforce. When women make less than men that hurts their families. They’ve got less to get by on. It hurts businesses because their customers have less to spend. We do better when everybody has a fair shot, when our economy works for all of us.”
Make the point **our lives** have changed, but the workplace has not kept up.

“Today, more women are their family’s main breadwinner than ever before. But on average, women are still earning just 77 cents on every dollar that a man does. And it’s still wrong. This isn’t 1958, it’s 2014.”

“Our economy hasn’t caught up to that reality yet. Outdated workplace policies are holding women and their families back. That has to change—because it holds all of us back. It begins with a simple principle—women should earn equal pay for equal work.

**FACT:** When the Equal Pay Act was signed 50 years ago, women were paid 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. Today, they earn just 77 cents—it’s time for 21st century workplace policies.

**FACT:** Women workers make up 64 percent of all minimum wage workers and are concentrated in lower wage jobs, where gender discrimination in pay persists. Over three-quarters of these female minimum wage workers are unmarried women.

**RESEARCH:** 70 percent of women say being paid less than men for the same work is a problem, including 51 percent who say it is a major problem.
Make it personal.

Voters like these policies, and we do not need to articulate why they are good for families. We need to articulate why they are good for their families, and families like theirs.

“You’re teaching your daughter that she can make her dreams come true with hard work—yet women still earn less than men in almost every job. Gender discrimination in pay still remains, even though it’s illegal. Give all children a fair shot. Let’s hold employers accountable and make it harder to discriminate against women.”

**FACT:** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which tracks women and men’s earnings in hundreds of jobs, women earn less across occupations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>Cents for every dollar earned by men</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and middle school teachers</td>
<td>81 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>64 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>79 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and Sheriff’s patrol officers</td>
<td>80 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters and Waitresses</td>
<td>86 cents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**FACT:** A woman working full time, year round at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour earns just $14,500—more than $4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three.

**RESEARCH:** 31 percent of women think they would be paid more if they were male, yet women still earn less than men in almost every job.

**RESEARCH:** 71 percent of women say discrimination by employers or supervisors is a problem, including nearly a third (31 percent) who say it is a major problem.
Define the problem before pivoting to the solution.

Help people who have different knowledge of and experience with gender discrimination in the workforce, by defining the common problem.

“Women are the sole or equal breadwinners in the great majority of families, yet women working at all income levels tend to be paid less. It should not be more difficult for women and their families to get ahead. Everyone who works hard should get a fair shot to succeed and provide for their families. It’s illegal to pay women less, but gender discrimination in pay exists. It’s time to make equal pay for equal work a reality.”

Telling a story can help make the point.

“Sarah spent 8 years working at a restaurant. She started at the bottom and worked her way up to shift supervisor. When the restaurant expanded, the owner brought in a second supervisor—a man with half of Sarah’s experience, but he was paid more.”

“Laura had an identical degree as her husband, and landed the exact same job, with the same company, as her husband. What wasn’t identical? Their pay. Even though she actually had more experience in the field, her husband was offered 13 percent more.”

**FACT:** In 2011, over 40 percent of all households with children under 18 were headed by women who were either the sole or primary breadwinners for their families, compared to just 11 percent in 1960. Of these “breadwinner moms,” 37 percent were married women with higher earnings than their husbands and 63 percent were single mothers.

**RESEARCH:** Making it harder for employers to discriminate against women is popular no matter educational attainment—63 percent of those without a college degree and 60 percent with a college degree passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act.
Acknowledge the differences between small and big businesses.

Delineate between large corporations and small businesses. Participants feel small businesses are in a similar boat as they are—struggling to get by in this economy. They also believe today’s economy works for the wealthy and large corporations, not the rest of us. While these corporations have amassed billions, wages are stagnant and fewer and fewer families can get by. These policies will not hurt them.

“There are millions of Americans whose hard work and dedication have not yet been rewarded. Our economy is adding jobs, but too many families are barely getting by. Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs, but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged. It’s time for policies that help families get ahead and to build an economy that works for all of us.”

**FACT:** Nearly two thirds of all minimum wage workers are women.

**FACT:** Costco pays its employees more than the minimum wage and is also seeing its profits soar.

**RESEARCH:** Voters see the positive impact of raising the minimum wage, ending gender discrimination in pay and guaranteeing paid family and medical leave have on American families—60 percent believe that, if they were enacted, American families will be more secure.
Talk about Raising the Minimum Wage and Equal Pay as policies that will help build an economy that works for all of us.

Group raising the minimum wage and equal pay as politics policies that help families get ahead. Both are important ways to give families economic security. However, many do not see the two as inter-related. Instead, according to the focus groups, raising the minimum wage is an important priority, but one that lower income families stand to directly benefit from. Equal pay has the potential to directly impact a range of families from across the socioeconomic spectrum. In every focus group, participants support both policies as important, but do not see one as a solution to the other.

“Raising the minimum wage and ending discrimination in pay bring us closer to giving all families the fair shot they need at success.”

**FACT:** Women account for more than half (55 percent) of all workers who would benefit from increasing the minimum wage to $10.10.

**FACT:** Research suggests that increasing the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour and indexing it to inflation could close about 5 percent of the gender wage gap.

**RESEARCH:** 62 percent of voters support an increase in the minimum wage to ten dollars and ten cents an hour, because more than two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women and this would help close the wage gap.
The Solution? Change Policies by Sending a Message to Washington & Communicating with your Community

Broad majorities of likely 2014 voters favor policies that help families get ahead, including raising the minimum wage and making it harder to pay women employees less than men. Our imperative is not to convince voters to support these policies, but to call them to action and go one step further and tell candidates and officeholders they support policies that have a direct impact on working families. We also believe that by actively engaging and communicating on these issues in their communities will help make these issues personal. Engaging in activism can be as easy as sending a Tweet or posting on Facebook, to signing a petition for a ballot initiative in your state.

“When we do not get involved, we send a message that we are happy with things as they are and do not want them to change. We need to send a message that we need equal pay for equal work and other policies to help families get ahead.”

FACT: Unmarried women, who make up 44.6 percent of the women who voted in 2012, earn even less when compared to men—just 71 cents on the dollar. Research indicates that if unmarried women with children made as much as comparable men, their annual incomes would increase by over $6,500 a year (17 percent), and unmarried women without children would make just under $6,000 more annually.

RESEARCH: 60 percent of voters are also likely to use a candidate’s support for policies that have a direct impact on working families as a vote-determinant. This includes 84 percent of Democratic women, 57 percent of Independent women and 53 percent of Republican women.
The National Numbers are in.

Gender Discrimination in Pay

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women Overall</th>
<th>African-American Women</th>
<th>Latinas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women Overall</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>77¢</strong></td>
<td>(23 cent gap)</td>
<td><strong>65¢</strong></td>
<td>(35 cent gap)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Min Wage Earners</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54¢</strong></td>
<td>(46 cent gap)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who are Women</td>
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“Raising the minimum wage and equal pay for equal work are policies that could help my family get ahead, not just get by #raisethewage #fairshot”

“Women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn for similar work. It’s time to end gender discrimination in pay #fairshot”

**National Likely 2014 Voter Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Unmarried Women</th>
<th>Likely College Educated</th>
<th>Children in the Home</th>
<th>Average Income</th>
<th>RAE Drop Off Rate* 64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Vote</td>
<td>49,892,755</td>
<td>49,188,254</td>
<td>22,470,790</td>
<td>18,693,034</td>
<td>33,355,389</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unmarried Women Drop Off Rate: 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Vote</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>$57,704.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data provided by Voter Participation Center and Clarity Campaign Labs

* The Rising American Electorate (RAE) represents 115 million eligible voters (53% of all eligible voters) and includes unmarried women, young voters (ages 19-29), African Americans, Latinos and all other non-white races.