



A time to finally bridge the gender wage gap

By Rebekah Warren, Detroit Free Press guest writer 11:21 a.m. EDT August 26, 2015



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Today, we recognize Women's Equality Day, commemorating the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote 95 years ago.

In these 95 years, we have made many strides – women now have greater opportunities to obtain higher education and to join the workforce. We are also better equipped to decide when and if we start a family, and we have more seats at the table in boardrooms and elected chambers across the country.

Unfortunately, we still have much to do in order to achieve full equality, particularly among low-income women, women of color, and transgender women, who continue to face the greatest barriers.

For example, [here in Michigan](#), women still make just 77 cents for every dollar our male counterparts are paid, while African American women make only 64 cents, and Latinas make a mere 54 cent, according to a report by the National Partnership for Women and Families. That means that women throughout the state are buying groceries, paying mortgages, and supporting families – all on smaller paychecks than men who have the same jobs.

It should come as no surprise then that women are also poorer in [every single state](#) than men, regardless of the gains we have made in higher education, the Institute for Women's Policy Research reports.

Meanwhile, the struggle to ensure that women have access to birth control and vital family planning services remains very real. This concern is especially critical for low-income women and those living in rural areas in a large state like Michigan.

Women should not have to worry how many miles they will need to travel to receive basic health care, plain and simple.

So as we celebrate this day, I urge all of you to recommit to what it stands for and demand action – both in Lansing and in Washington D.C. – to set aside the political rancor and advance real change for women and our families.

Let's pass legislation to require pay equity and earned sick time. Let's invest resources in making childcare more affordable and update our policies to support working parents. Let's extend Medicaid coverage so our most vulnerable citizens receive quality preventive care.

Of course, these are just a few of the ways I believe we can begin to improve the lives of women throughout our state. But if these policies sound astonishingly beneficial to all Michiganders, that's because women's issues are truly *everyone's* issues, and working to promote equality will only move *all of us* forward.

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We have come a long way since women were granted the right to vote, but it is up to all of us to ensure we continue to make progress for Michigan families.

We just can't wait another 95 years.

Rebekah Warren, a Democrat from Ann Arbor, represents Michigan's 18th state Senate District.

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