

MAZIE K. HIRONO

2ND DISTRICT, HAWAII

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thursday, May 31, 2007

**CONGRESSWOMAN HIRONO DENOUNCES
SUPREME COURT DECISION ON EQUAL PAY**

HONOLULU---Rep. Mazie K. Hirono says the Supreme Court decision on the Goodyear pay discrimination suit is wrong and is a setback for any worker who chooses to bring pay discrimination claims.

“The Court’s interpretation of the Civil Rights Act completely ignores the reality of the workplace because in many cases, workers don’t discover they are being subjected to pay discrimination until much later, often beyond 180 days. This decision is a setback for women in their fight for equality, as women are often the ones who bring such claims. This decision is totally one sided and unfair to workers.”

She pointed out the Supreme Court ruling could affect all workers who face pay discrimination – including religious, racial, and ethnic minorities, not just women.

“I will support efforts in Congress to remove the time restrictions used by the Court to deny the rights of workers to equal and fair pay.”

Rep. Hirono is a member of the Education and Labor Committee which has oversight of issues in the workplace. The chairman of the committee, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) says the ruling will force Congress to clarify the law’s intention.

Background:

The Supreme Court, by a vote of 5-4, handed down its decision in the Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber case yesterday. Lilly Ledbetter, an employee of Goodyear for 19 years, first brought charges of discrimination before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in March 1998 with proof that she was being paid between 15% and 40% less than each of her male counterparts, including those with less seniority. A federal jury found for Ledbetter, and the district court awarded her more than \$3 million in back pay and compensatory and punitive damages.

However, the Supreme Court overturned this award, saying Ledbetter’s claim had to be filed within 180 days “after the alleged unlawful employment practice occurred.” The Court held that this period runs from the date the employer makes a pay-setting decision, and not the date that the employee actually receives a paycheck with a discriminatory wage, even if the effects of the discrimination were not fully apparent to the worker at the time.

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