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STATE OF MONTANA

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**Governor Steve Bullock on Equal Pay Day: “Montana is Taking an Important Leadership Role to Close the Gender Pay Gap, but There is Still Much Work to be Done”**

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock today released the following statement in recognition of Equal Pay Day:

“As a father, husband, and son of hardworking, thoughtful, and intelligent women and girls, I know that all women deserve a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work. Montana is taking an important leadership role in closing the gender pay gap once and for all, but there is still much work to be done.

Equal Pay Day is the day when, on average, a woman’s pay for 2014 and 2015 equals a man’s pay for 2014.

At the beginning of this legislative session, Bullock proposed three pieces of legislation to address the gender pay gap in the state. The legislature killed the Montana Paycheck Fairness Act, which would provide wage transparency in the workplace, and a measure to make longevity pay fair for women or men who leave the workforce to care for family members.

The legislature also stripped down a measure that would correct a disparity in unemployment insurance benefits for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The original proposal, [HB 306](#), would provide for eligibility for 28 weeks of unemployment benefits for those who flee to avoid violence, putting it on par with other unemployment claims. The legislature reduced that to 14 weeks of eligibility. Last week, Bullock sent that bill back to the legislature, requesting that they provide full benefits to these Montanans. The legislature will take up Bullock’s request in the coming days.

“It is unacceptable that these commonsense proposals have become victims of political games,” Bullock said of the proposals. “Surely we can all agree that Montanans who are victims of domestic violence shouldn’t be forced to choose between their physical safety and their economic security. I

urge the legislature to provide equal benefits for victims of violence that all other recipients of unemployment insurance receive.”

In 2013, Bullock established the Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force to identify the causes of and develop solutions to the gender pay gap in Montana. Since it was established, the Task Force has hosted two summits to discuss pay equity. In addition, they’ve helped to institute wage negotiation training in Job Service offices across the state, spearheaded efforts to provide mentors for girls interested in pursuing a career in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, and led the first ever pay audit of state government employees to ensure pay equity in this sector.

[A recent study by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research](#) found that unless the disparity is more comprehensively addressed, Montana’s gender pay gap will not close until 2080.

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