

# Equal Pay Day

LAST WEEK OF MARCH/FIRST WEEK OF APRIL

*From “The Women of Reform Judaism Resolution on Pay Equity,” 2015*

Given the profound injustice of unequal pay, Women of Reform Judaism reaffirms its commitment to achieving pay equity and calls upon its sisterhoods to:

1. Urge the swift adoption of legislation that would provide women who face sex-based wage discrimination with a straightforward, accessible path for recourse, including but not limited to:
  - a. Barring retaliation against workers who disclose their wages, so that workers can more easily determine whether they face wage discrimination, and
  - b. Ensuring the right to maintain a class action lawsuit, providing women with the same remedies in court for pay discrimination as those subjected to discrimination based on race or national origin.
2. Work with synagogue leadership to enact just compensation policies for clergy and staff at all levels, or, where they already exist, to ensure that these policies properly guide the compensation, interviewing, hiring, firing and promoting of clergy and staff.
3. Implement sisterhood or congregational programs to empower women with tools to address pay inequity they may face in their professional lives outside the synagogue.
4. Take a leadership role to advocate for pay equity in their Jewish community and in their broader local community by forging partnerships with Jewish, other faith, and secular organizations in those communities.

## You Shall Not Defraud Your Fellow

*RABBI LIZ P. G. HIRSCH*

Not unlike our Jewish holidays, Equal Pay Day is not fixed to one calendar date of the year. It moves according to the specific calculations of the wage gap each year. Black Equal Pay Day, Latina Equal Pay Day, and Native Equal Pay Day are consistently later in the year, emphasizing the wider wage gap due to greater pay discrimination faced by women of color in the United States.

As the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism notes, “Equal Pay Day is not a holiday to celebrate, but rather a day we use to bring attention to the ongoing injustice of pay discrimination in the United States . . . mark[ing] how far into the new year women must work to receive in wages what their male counterparts earned in the previous calendar year.” The haftarah reading for Equal Pay Day is an excerpt from the Women of Reform Judaism’s 2015 “Resolution on Pay Equity.”

Our values, principles, and resolutions are the roots of the Reform Movement. With our text, we affirm our sacred commitment to gender equality and economic justice.

There is much work to be done. According to an analysis by the National Partnership for Women and Families, as of March 2020, “women in the United States are paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to men.” The resolution first calls upon us to take a legislative strategy, supporting current bills and policies that work to reduce the gender wage gap. We can look to the work of our Religious Action Center for the most current legislation in need of our advocacy. Significantly, the resolution also requires us to hold up a mirror and examine the policies and practices of our own institutions to ensure we are modeling pay equity in every way. To that end, seventeen organizations have joined together to form the Reform Pay Equity Initiative, which is developing best practices for addressing the gender wage gap.

As we learn in the Holiness Code, the heart of our Torah, “You shall not defraud your fellow. You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning” (Leviticus 19:13). May we work toward a day when all people are paid equally and justly.