

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

CONTACT:

Anjali Julka: 312-814-0093

State Marks Equal Pay Day at Rally in Chicago

Governor Quinn proclaims Equal Pay Day in Illinois

CHICAGO—April 12, 2011. State officials today marked national Equal Pay Day by joining hundreds of people at a rally in Daley Center Plaza to draw attention to the wage gap that persists between men and women in the workforce. The date marks how far into the current year a woman must work, on average, to earn as much as a man earned the previous year. Governor Pat Quinn proclaimed today as Equal Pay Day in Illinois to increase awareness of the state's equal pay law and to underscore the importance of pay equity between men and women who do the same work.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois women still earn just 78 cents of every dollar earned by Illinois men based on the median weekly earnings of full-time workers. The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) enforces the Illinois Equal Pay Act, which was enacted to help close the wage gap between men and women. IDOL has successfully recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars in back wages for women who were paid less than their male co-workers for doing the same work, in violation of the law.

"Today's rally reinforces the importance and significance of the state's equal pay law, especially for those who have personally experienced pay inequity at their workplace. The law is clear that men and women should be paid the same if they perform the same work. The Department will continue to deliver this message and ensure that both employees and employers are aware of the law's requirements," said Doris Moy, Illinois Department of Labor.

Since the law went into effect in 2004, the Department has received 507 complaints and of the investigations completed to date, recovered nearly \$470,000 in back wages for workers who did not receive equal pay for equal work.

The rally, attended by Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon, Evelyn Murphy of The WAGE Project and other prominent equal pay advocates was organized by Women Employed and sponsored by the Illinois Federation of Business and Professional Women; Mujeres Latinas en Accion; American Association of University Women (AAUW), Chicago; Chicago Commission on Human Relations Advisory Council on Women; Chicago NOW; Chicago Women in Trades; Cook County Commission on Women's Issues; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC); Illinois Department of Human Rights; National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA-IL); Northwestern University School of Law, Women's Leadership Coalition; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor; YWCA Metropolitan Chicago.

Illinois' Equal Pay Act prohibits employers with four or more employees from paying unequal wages to men and women doing the same or substantially similar work, requiring equal skill, effort, responsibility and under similar working conditions. There are exceptions, such as if the wage difference is based upon a seniority system, merit system, or a system measuring earnings by quantity or quality of production or if they use factors other than gender to determine the pay differential. The law protects both men and women and any individual who files an equal pay complaint is protected under the Act from harassment or retaliation. If an employer is found guilty of pay discrimination, they will be required to make up the wage difference to the employee and may be subject to pay legal costs and civil fines of up to \$2,500 per violation.

For more information on Illinois' Equal Pay Act or to file a complaint, call the Illinois Department of Labor's Equal Pay hotline at 1-866-EPA-IDOL. Complaint forms are also available to download on the Department's website: www.state.il.us/agency/idol.

The Governor's proclamation reads:

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, year-round, full-time working women in 2009 earned only 77 percent of the earnings of year-round, full-time working men, indicating little change or progress in pay equity; and,

WHEREAS, according to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Illinois women in 2008 earned 78 percent of every dollar earned by Illinois men based on median weekly earnings of full-time workers; and,

WHEREAS, equal pay for equal work strengthens the security of families today and eases future retirement costs while enhancing Illinois' economy; and,

WHEREAS, in 2003, the Illinois Equal Pay Act became law, prohibiting employers from paying unequal wages to men and women for doing the same or substantially similar work; and,

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Labor promotes and protects the rights, wages, welfare, working conditions and safety and health of Illinois workers through enforcement of state labor laws; and,

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Labor is a state agency dedicated to advancing pay equity in the workplace and protecting workers from gender-based wage discrimination through its enforcement of the Illinois Equal Pay Act; and,

WHEREAS, Tuesday, April 12 symbolizes the time in the new year in which wages paid to American women catch up to wages paid to men from the previous year and raises awareness of the wage gap between men and women:

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim April 12, 2011 as **ILLINOIS EQUAL PAY DAY**, in recognition of the value of women's skills and contributions to the labor force, and I call on all employers to provide equal pay for equal work, both as a matter of fairness and as a matter of good business.

###