



# Advocacy Update

Sent July 17, 2013

## **Employment Non-Discrimination Act**

In 29 states, it is legal to fire, refuse to hire, demote, or fail to promote an employee based on sexual orientation; in 33 states, it is legal to do so based on gender identity. This is a gross injustice that adversely affects members of the LGBT community. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would address this disparity and prohibit workplace discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, while exempting small businesses and religious organizations.

Last week, for the first time, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee voted to advance a version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (S. 815) inclusive of protections for members of the transgender community. The Democrats on the committee (Senators Tom Harkin (IA), Barbara A. Mikulski (MD), Patty Murray (WA), Bernard Sanders (I) (VT), Robert P. Casey, Jr. (PA), Kay R. Hagan (NC), Al Franken (MN), Michael F. Bennet (CO), Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), Tammy Baldwin (WI), Christopher S. Murphy (CT), and Elizabeth Warren (MA)) were joined by three Republicans in voting yes: Senator Orrin Hatch (UT), Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK) and one of the bill's champions, Senator Mark Kirk (IL).

WRJ has been an historic advocate of LGBT rights, with [resolutions from the 1990s](#) calling for LGBT equality. If your senator voted for ENDA last week, [don't forget to send them your thanks and appreciation](#). If they didn't or if they were not on the Committee and therefore have not yet voted, be sure to [tell them why you support this legislation](#).

## **Women and Jewish Organizations**

The [pay gap](#) between men and women is a huge problem in American society - hundreds of thousands of dollars huge, in fact. With women making [only 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man](#), a female high school graduate will lose over \$700,000 of wages over her lifetime, a female college graduate \$1.2 million and a female professional school graduate over \$2 million.

While there's a lot that can be done legislatively to fix this problem, some think that this issue won't be fully resolved until there is a sufficient mass of female heads of prominent organizations. Unfortunately, in the Jewish community, this goal still feels pretty far away. Of the top 20 highest paid Jewish professionals in America, [none are women](#). Of the top 50, only five are women. And the effect trickles down: women working at Jewish organizations make an embarrassing [62.5 cents](#) for every dollar earned by their male peers.

WRJ has been [advocating for equal pay for equal work](#) for the last fifty years, and will continue to be involved in this issue moving forward. We encourage our Sisterhoods to help young women fight for the fair pay they deserve. Here are some ways your sisterhood can be involved in this issue:

- Host a sisterhood workshop where professional women learn tips for having important salary negotiation discussions with their supervisors and employers.
- Create mentorship opportunities pairing experienced working women with young professionals to aid them in their professional development and to help them search for their next job.

*For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit [www.wrj.org/social-justice-home](http://www.wrj.org/social-justice-home)*

- Raise this issue in the context of your own synagogue through a panel discussion or even private conversations with synagogue leadership about its own employment practices and pay scales for women.
- Write a letter to your Member of Congress asking them to support the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would provide a legislative fix to this societal injustice.

### **New Israeli Ambassador**

Four years after he was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United States, [Michael Oren has announced his intention to resign the post this fall](#). During his tenure, Ambassador Oren forged a very positive relationship with the Reform Movement. Shortly after assuming office, [Ambassador Oren spoke](#) at the URJ Biennial in Toronto in 2009. Ambassador Oren has served as a key partner on substantive issues that are key priorities of WRJ, working with the Reform Movement on issues of [conversion and religious pluralism](#), the [Sharansky plan to ensure women's rights and pluralism at the Kotel](#), and on furthering the [peace process](#).

As this change in Ambassador occurs, it is important to remain committed to a robust relationship with Israel and to continue to build ties with the new Ambassador and others in Israel's leadership. If your Sisterhood is involved in the [Twinning Program](#), use this as an opportunity to open the dialogue about how American congregations can best support our Israeli counterparts. If you are not involved in the Twinning Program, consider joining – and talk to your congregation's leadership about other ways in which WRJ can be involved in the synagogue's Israel programming.