



AFSCME Michigan Pays Women 85 Cents for Every Dollar for Men, Analysis Finds

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Unions and progressives who are agitating for new federal regulations on employers' compensation decisions insinuate that pay differences between men and women in American workplaces are due to sexism. But some of those unions may have a pay gap perception problem of their own.

The Michigan arm of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees is one. A review of a recent union financial disclosure statement shows that women at AFSCME Michigan are paid 85 cents for every dollar that a man gets, on average. At the same time, the union affiliate has been promoting "equal pay day" – the amount of time in a year women allegedly work to make up the pay gap – and says that "union jobs can guarantee equal pay for equal work."

Suggestions that differences in the pay received by men and women result from sexism can be based on superficial comparisons that ignore the different types of jobs people choose, the number of hours they put in, life choices, seniority and other factors, according to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, which conducted the AFSCME pay analysis.

It is highly unlikely that the male-female pay differential at AFSCME is based on sexism, according to the Mackinac Center. Evidence suggests that nationwide, workplace pay differentials are based on benign and voluntary factors.

But that was not the message AFSCME sent two weeks ago when it issued a press release asserting that "women still earn \$0.80 on the dollar relative to their male counterparts."

According to a study by the job search and recruiter Glassdoor.com, gender-based wage differentials virtually disappear when other relevant factors are accounted for. Other independent research has come to the same conclusion.

"There is much that we must do to close the gender pay gap and end the injustice of poverty level wages in general," AFSCME said in the recent press release. The union issued it to celebrate the passage by the U.S. House of Representatives of a bill to impose a comprehensive nationwide regulatory regime on employer compensation decisions.

AFSCME is part of the AFL-CIO. Representatives from AFSCME and the Michigan AFL-CIO did not return requests for comment.

Chelsea Follett, managing editor of HumanProgress.org, which is run by the libertarian Cato Institute, said in a phone interview that men and women often work in different ways and these statistics do not account for the differences.

Follett said the gender pay gap would be a problem if it were caused by sexism, but the leading factor is the personal choices of workers. If the unions were asked to explain their own wage gap, she said, they would likely explain that the salaries are based on different qualifications of different people.

Rachel Greszler, an economic research fellow at the free-market Heritage Foundation, said in a phone interview that it is interesting that the unions that are campaigning against a wage gap also have one. Likely, she said, these are due to the particular choices of women.

If the government tried to impose more rigid regulations on employers to try to fully eliminate the gap, Greszler said, this would only harm women. That's because the regulations would remove women's ability to make their own choices about hours and leave, and make them more of a liability to hire.

Greszler said that the government cannot fully solve the gap problem because it can't force men and women to alter the choices they make.

The information about the union comes from the most recent federal LM-2 form it submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor for 2018, according to the Mackinac Center.