

# *PERSONALLY SPEAKING*

*Special Issue*

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## **EQUAL PAY DAY: THE DAY AFTER**

Mayo Research Institute

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By now anyone paying attention to the media including those sources reporting on the pay differentials between men and women who play professional soccer knows that across the board women are paid less than men. The number most often cited is women are paid 79 percent of what men are paid. The problem according to equal-pay-for-equal-work advocates needs to be fixed.

However, rival groups who are not persuaded that the 79 percent represents a real pay differential argue there are many important differences between men's work and women's work such as the dangers involved in offshore oil drilling, for instance, and power line repair, occupations that are dominated by men. That argument fortified with other pay-related factors including differences in educational attainment and years of work experience has been ongoing for decades. We do not intend herein to try to set it straight.

Rather our concern is that buried in the very same Census Bureau data that produced the 79 percent pay differential is a trend that is most disturbing. Since 1973, a starting point often used today to evaluate trends in pay, the inflation-adjusted median earnings of women who work year round, full time **climbed** from \$30,182 in 1973 to \$39,621 or **31 percent**. Even so their pay in 2014 is well below the \$50,383 earned by men with the same year-round, full-time work commitment.

Nevertheless, between 1973 and 2014 inflation-adjusted median earnings of men working year round, full time, has **fallen** by **9 percent**. No doubt much of the decline in their earnings is due to the long-term loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs.

Whatever the reason for this long-term trend, the equal-pay-for-equal-work issue that is a thorn in the side of millions of working women must not be allowed to drive a wedge between them and the millions of men for whom there has been a serious deterioration in earnings. America needs to find better ways to stimulate economic growth that treats millions of women fairly and doesn't leave millions of men behind.

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