

# PRESS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

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## GOV. RITTER SIGNS LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING A PAY EQUITY COMMISSION

*New commission will be within the Department of Labor and  
Employment*

(DENVER) – On Tuesday, May 25, Gov. Bill Ritter signed House Bill 10-1417 into law, establishing a Pay Equity Commission to work directly with employers, business groups, educational institutions and employees in an ongoing effort to address pay inequities in Colorado. A temporary Pay Equity Commission that was established in the Summer of 2007 was the precursor to this permanent Pay Equity Commission. It was created to examine the scope and breadth of pay inequities in Colorado and, at the conclusion of their work, the group issued a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

Among its key findings was that effecting real social change could not be accomplished by simply issuing a report. Finding solutions and transforming society is a slow process, the group stressed, one that required the establishment of a *permanent* body to work with the Department of Labor and Employment's staff in providing outreach and education to employers and in making a compelling business case for pay-equity. That recommendation resulted in legislation enacted by the General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Ritter at the Capitol today.

“By signing House Bill 1417, we move a step closer to a day when wage discrimination will be a thing of the past,” Gov. Ritter said at the signing ceremony. “This commission will move us forward in reaching parity to a state where women earn roughly seventy seven cents for every dollar a man earns in the same job. Resolving this inequity will have many benefits, allowing businesses to attract and retain highly qualified employees and improving productivity.”

The governor thanked 9 to 5 Working Women and Representative Cherylin Penison and Majority Caucus Chair Senator Suzanne Williams for their efforts on behalf of the legislation. “And I particularly want to thank Cabinet member Don Mares, Executive Director of the Department of Labor and Employment,” he said. “From the very beginning, he has championed this as an issue that needed to be addressed. There were a lot of challenges in getting here but Don has been persistent in moving us forward.”

“The word of the day is persistence,” Mares says. “I thank the governor on behalf of my mother, his mother, my two daughters, his daughter and all the women in this state who will have this issue examined. This legislation underscores Colorado’s recognition that closing the pay gap is a key component of sustainable economic development.”

The Pay Equity Commission is to be made up of eleven members representing a diversity of stakeholders including:

- The Executive Director of the Department of Labor and Employment and the Director of the Civil Rights Division (or their designees);
- Two members appointed by the President of the Senate;
- Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- One member of a women’s national association or organization;
- One member who is an attorney with experience in labor issues;
- One member representing a business association, appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;
- One member representing a Chamber of Commerce or consortium of chambers appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives;
- One member who is a private employer with fewer than fifteen employees, to be appointed by the Minority Leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Angelina Sierra-Sandoval is a High School graduate, class of 2010. “I have learned how important hard work is and how far it can take you,” she said at the bill signing ceremony. “I’ve seen my Mom work hard to send me to school. This legislation recognizes all the women who work hard to support themselves and their families. Today, we celebrate pay equity but we cannot stop here. The work that goes on as we move forward will transform workplaces into places that really ‘work’ for women, their families and employers.”