



City of Everett
Office of the Mayor
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EVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS 02149

PRESS RELEASE

Monday, October 24, 2016

MAYOR DEMARIA APPLAUDS DOROTHY SIMONELLI FOR HER PIONEERING EFFORTS FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

On behalf of the City of Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria, First Lady, Stacy DeMaria, and Alexandra DeMaria honored Dorothy Simonelli in recognition of her pioneering efforts and decades long commitment to achieve equal pay for women. Mayor DeMaria credited Mrs. Simonelli for the passage of a Massachusetts' Pay Equity Law that was passed last year.

In 1989, Dorothy and 41 cafeteria workers sued Everett Public Schools after not receiving a raise that they had requested. Numbers showed that the 41 women only made half as much as male custodians. The Everett lunch ladies initially won their case with a Middlesex Superior Court judge awarding them close to \$1 million in back wages. However they lost on appeal in 1998, a case that spanned nine years and went twice to the Supreme Judicial Court. The SJC decision was 4-3 and Justice Margaret Marshall, who later became Chief Justice, criticized her colleagues for not wanting to change society to make it more equitable. Existing law at the time required that men and women doing the same job be paid the same, but didn't specify when it came to jobs that were comparable.

"I want to applaud and recognize Dottie and the other Everett Public School workers involved for their tremendous courage and personal sacrifice to achieve pay equity," states Mayor DeMaria, "These women have made life better for our mothers, daughters, grandchildren and all of us will enjoy a better quality of life in a society where pay equity exists."

In 2009, President Obama in his first act as president signed federal equal pay legislation named after an Alabama woman named Lily Ledbetter. In July 2016, after many years of female state legislators filing a pay equity bill every session without success, Massachusetts passed the most aggressive equal pay law in the country. The legislation is groundbreaking, making Massachusetts perhaps the first state to prohibit employers from seeking salary history upfront, as well as giving employers legal incentives to conduct salary reviews to detect disparities. Currently, women in Massachusetts on average make only 82 cents for every dollar a man earns.

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