

The Unequal Equation...

EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

No matter how many times you repeat it, something about the phrase "equal pay for work of equal value" just sounds right. After all, who would object to the concept of paying two (or more) employees who happen to perform the same task with the same result an equal amount? *Sounds* fair, doesn't it?

Unfortunately, it only *sounds* fair. In practice, it's not that simple and not at all fair.

The problems surrounding the issue of "equal pay for work of equal value" actually have less to do with any concept of *equality* or *fairness* than they have to do with *who's* promoting the concept: lobby groups and politicians. And when politicians get involved, even the most just and equitable concepts suddenly change their meaning and strange, unintended things start to happen.

The *real* issue, of course, revolves around the word *value* which, when defined, means "to place an estimate of worth on." Unlike individuals however, the *law* is incapable of placing a "value" on anything; any attempt to do so would make it bear *unequally* on differing parties, since "valuing" is an act of discrimination --- and *discrimination has no place in the laws of a free society!*

Even worse, equal pay laws insist that *value* be placed upon a *task* rather than on a particular *person*, and that all *people* performing that task be paid an equal amount, regardless of their relative value to the employer. In other words, equal pay laws literally demand that *no value be place on people!* --- but on "work" instead. What law could be more demeaning and impersonal to employees than that?

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Of course, there are those who would argue that equal pay laws don't impose a fixed value on particular jobs, but instead compel employers to pay an *equal rate* to each of their employees performing the same function. But this begs even more serious questions: *equal to whom or what?* To the *highest* paid person doing the job? To the *average* wage paid for the job? The *lowest*? Why? Who decides?

Freedom Party believes that *people have value too!* In many differing ways, *people* have qualities that may make some of them more or less valuable to a particular employer than others. Punctuality, attitude, mobility, ability, intelligence, experience, physical strength, appearance, education, initiative, consistency, perseverance, dependability, loyalty, etc. are but a *few* of the factors involved in determining the relative *value* of an *employee*. Forcing employers to ignore all these factors would do more to undermine the status of employees than any other single action we can think of.

But the process of "valuing" doesn't end here: there are even more factors to consider than those already listed, namely, conditions in the marketplace (ie. *supply* and *demand*). An employee's wage is ultimately determined by the number of other potential employees willing to do the same work, and by the demand placed on such employees by potential employers. In turn, employers determine what they are willing to pay for certain jobs based on what their customers are willing to pay for the product or service they provide.

To deny any or all of these participants their choice in helping determine these values would benefit no one, least of all *productive* employees, who will lose the reward of their extra efforts.

Freedom Party believes that the *purpose of government* is to *protect* our freedom of choice, *not* to restrict it.

If we, as a society, are really concerned that employees are paid what they're worth, then justice demands that those responsible for the payment of "values" and those offering the work to be valued both be free to negotiate their mutual rewards without government intervention.

It's the only equitable thing to do.