



Elizabeth Warren Becomes Latest Candidate To Unveil Pay Equity Plan

Insights

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A few months ago, Kamala Harris unveiled an ambitious plan to introduce stricter legal measures to force employers to comply with pay equity standards. Fellow senator and Democratic presidential hopeful Elizabeth Warren has now announced her own pay equity plan that she would push were to she capture the White House in 2020. Warren's plan, released on July 5, would promote pay equity – with a special focus on aiding women of color – by imposing new federal contractor rules and strengthening enforcement against systemic discrimination.

Warren points out that “employers tilt the playing field against women of color at every stage of employment.” As Splinter News reports, she specifically has concern about employers using salary history to make new offers, “perpetuating the trap of low-wages. Once employed, black and brown women are disproportionately the victims of sexual harassment and discrimination, and have limited access to executive roles.” She also cites a number of statistics showing that Black, Native, and Latina women are paid much less than white men for the same work, and that the gap in weekly earnings between white and Black women is higher today than it was 40 years ago.

To combat this problem, Warren announced that she would embark on a three-prong attack on the pay equity problem if she were to be elected president. She would issue a series of executive orders to accomplish the following:

1. **Boost Federal Contractor Pay Equity Requirements**

Several of Warren's plans to aid those working for companies with federal contracts are quite specific and would result in massive changes to the human resources policies of a great many private employers. She would ban mandatory arbitration and non-competition agreements (which she says disproportionately impact women and women of color in the areas of wage theft, discrimination, and harassment), and prohibit employers from asking applicants about their past salary information and criminal histories. She would also require a \$15 minimum wage and benefits for all federal contractor employees (including paid family leave, “fair scheduling,” and collective bargaining rights).

However, one of her plans is somewhat vague and could be difficult to enforce or interpret. She says she wants to “deny contracting opportunities to companies with poor track records on diversity and equal pay.” The details are sketchy at this point, but she says she would build on

existing disclosure requirements (probably referring to the EEO-1 form) and require contractors to disclose data on employees' pay and roles, broken out by race, gender, and age.

2. **Take Aim At Systemic Discrimination**

Warren's next step would be to strengthen and target federal enforcement against systemic workplace discrimination. She specifically identifies the low-wage service industry as a field with higher rates of discriminatory practices but lower numbers of reported violations (due to workers in these fields being scared to lose their jobs). "My EEOC," Warren says, "will more closely monitor these fields and bring in top talent to enforce claims in those areas. It will also issue first-of-its-kind guidance on enforcing claims involving the intersectional discrimination that women of color face from the interlocking biases of racism and sexism."

3. **Revamp The Federal Job Sector**

Her third prong would not impact private-sector employers, but is still worth learning about. Warren states that the federal government does a "dismal" job on diversity and inclusion when it comes to its massive workforce, especially at the leadership level. Warren would recruit and develop leadership paths for underrepresented workers by diversifying recruitment, supporting development, and open up promotion pathways.

Now that two of the top Democratic candidates have unveiled their own specific pay equity plans, it wouldn't be surprising to see other leading hopefuls release their own proposals. It looks like pay equity will be a topic that will be closely examined during this extended primary campaign season.

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