

Equal Time

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President Barack Obama called her a “grandmother from Alabama,” but don't be fooled ? Lilly Ledbetter is a steel magnolia. The force behind the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, she preached her message of equal pay for women at two venues on the Tulane University uptown campus on Wednesday (Oct. 6).



Paycheck equity “is a matter of human dignity,” says Lilly Ledbetter, who gave the Betty Werlein Carter Woman in Public Policy Lecture on Wednesday (Oct. 6) on the uptown campus. (Photos by Sally Asher)

“This story isn't mine, it belongs to each of you. It touches men and women, everybody across this country,” Ledbetter said in a lecture at the Freeman Auditorium in the Woldenberg Art Center on Wednesday night.

She said she never intended for her name to come before the U.S. Supreme Court, or to fly weekly to Washington to lobby for fair pay.

Her battle against Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., where she worked for nearly 20 years before finding out she had been paid consistently less than other male

supervisors, ended up in the nation's highest court, where she lost her case in 2007. The judges held that the statute of limitations for presenting an equal-pay lawsuit begins at the date the pay was agreed upon, not at the date of the most recent paycheck.

The Ledbetter Act changed some of those rules. It was the first legislation signed by Obama after he took office in 2009. To view a video of Obama signing the bill, click [here](#).

Government studies indicate that women are still paid only 77 cents for every dollar men earn ? and that's why Ledbetter is fighting for the Paycheck Fairness Act, which is pending in Congress and would close more loopholes for women.

Why did Ledbetter take up the fight? "I just couldn't let it go â?; this is for the women and families who come after me," including her own daughter and granddaughter.

Ledbetter has never been compensated for her lost wages by Goodyear, though she hopes a book now in the works will help make up for that.

She gave the Betty Werlein Carter Woman in Public Policy Lecture, sponsored by the [Newcomb College Institute](#), Newcomb Student Programs and the Murphy Institute, and also spoke to students at Tulane Law School.