The NAACP applauds President Barack Obama's recent signing of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law. The act, which has been a legislative priority for the NAACP since mid-2007, was the very first piece of legislation signed into law by President Obama, January 29.

"The bill will combat wage discrimination and helps begin leveling the field of compensation, regardless of the race, ethnicity, religion or gender of who receives the pay," said NAACP President and CEO Benjamin T. Jealous. "For every dollar made by a Caucasian male in the U.S. today, it is estimated [by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics] that an African American male makes 79 cents for equal work, an African American woman 77 cents and a white woman slightly more than 80 cents. That is blatant economic discrimination in its plainest sense and cents."

The act addresses the reckless Supreme Court decision, nearly two years ago in Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. that an individual who is receiving less pay for equal work due to his or her race, ethnic background, gender or age, must file a lawsuit within 180 days of his or her first discriminatory paycheck in order for the suit to be considered by the courts. That ruling ignored the fact that individuals who are receiving less pay often do not realize that they are being discriminated against in the first three months and often can only confirm such discrimination after months, years or even decades of investigation.

The law reinstitutes the original intent of Congress in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, by mandating that an individual may file a discrimination suit against an employer (or former employer) within 180 days of the end of his or her employment, thereby restoring the ability of victims of pay discrimination to obtain effective remedies.

At the signing ceremony President Obama said, "It's bad for business to pay somebody less because of their gender or their age or their race or their ethnicity, religion or disability; and that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory, or footnote in a casebook. It's about how our laws affect the daily lives and the daily realities of people: their ability to make a living and care for their families and achieve their goals."

Founded in 1909, the NAACP--the nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots–based civil rights organization—is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Its more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.