

## LESSON PLAN

# THE EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1963



President Kennedy signs the Equal Pay Act, June 10, 1963

*Abbie Rowe. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

### GRADE

9th–12th

### TIME

30–50 minutes

### BRIEF SYNOPSIS

This document provides resources for educators regarding the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Materials provided are diverse and include websites, articles and various types of primary sources. Each resource can be used by itself or in conjunction with each other. When used together, students can see the progression of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 beginning with the 1960 election through present day.

### MATERIALS

- [Appendix A](#) | Blank Map of the United States
- [Appendix B](#) | Breaking Down Statistics Handout
- [Appendix C](#) | Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions

- [Appendix D](#) | Margaret Mallon Letter to President Kennedy, 1962
- [Appendix E](#) | Newspaper Clippings
- [Appendix F](#) | President Kennedy's Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, 1962

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the early 1960s, women were only paid 60% as much as men but made up approximately one-third of the labor force. Additionally, women tended to be employed in low wage jobs that were considered appropriate for their sex. In 1961, Esther Peterson, Director of the US Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, urged President Kennedy to create the President's Commission on the Status of Women; the group's primary goal was to evaluate and make recommendations to improve the legal, civic, economic and social status of American women. President Kennedy hoped the Commission would "indicate what remains to be done to demolish prejudices and outmoded customs which act as barriers to the full partnership of women in our democracy." The Commission was established on December 14, 1961, chaired by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Esther Peterson took on the leadership role after Mrs. Roosevelt's death in November 1962.

The Commission generally assessed the position of women and functions they perform in the home, society, and economy. Areas explored in depth within the larger context included education, home/community services, private employment, federal government employment, labor standards, federal social insurance/taxes affecting women and legal treatment of women relating to civil and political rights. In collaboration with other committees, the product of their efforts was a 95-page document entitled *American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*. It is here that the group reported the data they gathered regarding women in the work force, population projections and societal trends and recommendations on the work that must be done to ensure gender equality in the workplace.

In July 1962, while the Presidential Women's Commission was still gathering data, Kennedy began laying the groundwork for gender equality. He sent a memorandum to the heads of all executive departments and agencies in which he firmly stated that equal employment opportunity without discrimination must be provided through the filling of positions based solely on an applicant's fit and merit. He asserted that, per the Attorney General's guidance, it is within his presidential purview to direct the department and agency heads to "take immediate steps so that... appointment or promotion shall be made without regard to sex" except in unusual circumstances approved by the Civil Service Commission. This was a major step towards gender equality in the workplace.

President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act of 1963 on June 10, 1963. This law prohibited employers from paying different wages to men and women working under similar conditions in jobs requiring the same level of skill, effort and responsibility. At the time President Kennedy remarked, "It is a first step. It affirms our determination that when women enter the labor force, they will find equality in their pay envelopes."

Although this was considered a milestone in the fight for gender equality, the gender wage gap has not closed as rapidly as some in 1963 may have hoped. Over time the wage gap has slowly started to narrow, but under the surface, bigger issues exist. According to the National Partnership for Women & Families, in 2021, women were still paid just 84 cents for every dollar paid to men. The wage discrepancy is larger and more concerning when comparing the average earnings of women of various races and ethnicities to that of Non-Hispanic men. Despite the hurdles still at hand, the path for gender equality in the workplace is slowly being paved and even the smallest of milestones should be celebrated.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the reasons why women were fighting for equality in the workforce in the 1960s?
2. In what ways did women, the media, political interest groups and the government react to this movement?
3. In what ways was the Equal Pay Act of 1963 successful?
4. How and why is the gender wage gap still an issue today? In what ways can we see it is still an issue (over time, career fields, location based, etc.)?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to analyze the cause and effects of events and social issues relating to the changing role of women in the labor force.
2. Students will be able to identify the actions and weigh the outcomes of governmental policies intended to create economic opportunities for women in the labor force.
3. Students will be able to analyze the impact of political changes relating to the wage gap generated by political parties, interest groups, or individuals, both past and present.
4. Students will be able to evaluate how gender roles affect the opportunities available in society based on gender.
5. Students will be able to evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by circumstances of the time and analyze its change and continuity throughout historical eras.

## CURRICULUM STANDARDS

[TEKS | C3 standards](#)

## RESOURCES

- [Women Pay Gap by State](#)
  - › This website provides information on the gender wage gap by state. The color coded map of the United States shows the difference in pay between men and women in cents per U.S. dollar.
  - › There is also a drop-down menu that will provide information on the gender wage gap by race and ethnicity. This is helpful for students to dig deeper into the details and statistics on the gender wage gap.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix B: Breaking Down Statistics Handout](#) to graph the difference in wages in relation to race and ethnicity.
- [Gender Pay Gap 1960-2020 | National Committee on Pay Equity](#)
  - › This website provides information and statistics relating to gender and wage discrepancies from the years 1960-2020.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix B: Breaking Down Statistics Handout](#) to visually represent the change in wages before, during and after the Equal Pay Act of 1963.
    - › This can also be used to spark discussion on what impact they see the Equal Pay Act of 1963 having on earning equality and what can be done today to help close the gap even further.
- [Data and Statistics | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\) Website](#)
  - › This website provides various categories of gender wage gap data for students to research and analyze. Topics include top 10 occupations women have held over the last 100 years, most current annual data for women in the labor force, earnings, and much more.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix A: Blank Map of the United States](#) that will allow students to create a visual representation of the data they have researched.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix B: Breaking Down Statistics Handout](#) to visually represent the change in wages before, during, and after the Equal Pay Act of 1963.
    - › This can also be used to spark discussion on what impact they see the Equal Pay Act of 1963 having on earning equality and what can be done today to help close the gap even further.

- [The Gender Pay Gap Across the US in 2022](#) | Trevor Wheelwright, 2 March 2022, Business.org
  - › This article provides more information about the current wage gap issues and delves into which career fields have the smallest and largest gender pay differences.
  - › Included on this webpage is a color-coded map showing the wage gap between genders in cents per U.S. dollar from the year 2022.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix A](#): Blank Map of the United States to provide a visual representation of the data they gathered while reading this article.
  - › This can be used to start a discussion about the types of occupations with the smallest and largest pay gaps, potential reasons, and traditional roles of work and the composition of the labor force have changed in the U.S.
- [American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women 1963](#)
  - › This is a PDF of the *Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women* presented to President Kennedy in October 1963.
  - › This document is 95 pages in length, therefore, difficult to use in its entirety. There are some very good visual depictions of data statistics from both 1961 and earlier as well as a stark perspective on the status of working women in the early 1960s.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix B](#): Breaking Down Statistics Handout to allow students to look at historical data closer.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendix C](#): Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions.
    - › Students can be assigned parts of a section within the document and use the Analysis and Guiding Questions page to help deepen their understanding of both the text and its meaning in relation to the time.
    - › This can be used to engage the students in small group or large class discussion about the effects of varying opportunities based on gender and the impact of political changes brought about by individuals, groups or the government relating to the gender wage gap.
- [Appendix A](#) | Blank Map of the United States
  - › Students may use this to visually illustrate gender wage gap statistics by geography.
    - › Students may be assigned differently aspects from wage difference in 1960s, today or a chosen year in between, presence of women in the labor force, wage discrepancies by race or ethnicity, etc.
- [Appendix B](#) | Breaking Down Statistics Handout
  - › This is a versatile handout that students can use to document and analyze the statistics they are researching relating to the gender wage gap.
  - › The first table can be used when gathering and analyzing statistics based solely gender (women vs. men).
  - › The second table can be used when the student is looking at the wage gap over time. Students will select three years, write down the average annual earnings of men and women and find the difference both in dollars and a percentage.
  - › The third table gives students a chance to create a bar graph to represent data they gather about the gender wage gap relating to women's average annual earnings of different races and ethnicities compared to that of White, Non-Hispanic men.
- [Appendix C](#) | Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions
  - › This resource helps students review primary sources by breaking down the document, analyzing the creator's intention, identifying the intended audience and examining historical context and relevancy.
  - › This resource can be used in conjunction with [Appendices D-F](#) to help students get a better understanding of the primary source type, creator's intention(s), target audience, and historical perspective and significance.
  - › This resource can also be used in conjunction with [American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women 1963](#).

- › Students can work in small groups to read through their assigned section of the larger document.
- › They can use this resource, [Appendix C](#): Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions to make the section more manageable by narrowing the scope and providing specific elements for students to identify.
- [Appendix D](#) | Margaret Mallon Letter to President Kennedy, September 28, 1962
  - › Margaret Mallon was an average American citizen with a desire to express her viewpoint on gender rights to the nation’s leadership.
  - › This letter, addressed to the President’s Press Secretary Pierre Salinger, includes an article highlighting a presidential greeting of the Burros Club in which he commended them for the “achievements of the Eighty-Seventh Congress.”
  - › Ms. Mallon points out that this organization is restricted to male-only membership and in fact the title “Burro” is used to label a masculine individual. She goes on to explain that the female Congressional Secretaries do the same hard work and notes her surprise that President Kennedy would not openly give equal praise to both groups.
- [Appendix E](#) | Newspaper Clippings
  - › The first newspaper clipping, from the *Washington Post*, was written during the 1960 presidential campaign and shows, then-Senator Kennedy’s commitment to equality. Writer Marie Smith highlights Kennedy’s stance on “supporting legislation which will guarantee to women equality of rights under the law.”
  - › The second clipping from *The Evening Star* newspaper announces President Kennedy’s signing of the Equal Pay Act in June 1963 which provides women equal pay and rights in the workplace. This article also focuses on other ideas the President has to help mothers be present in the workplace such as opening more daycare centers.
- [Appendix F](#) | President Kennedy’s Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, July 24, 1962
  - › In this July 1963 memorandum, President Kennedy discusses presidential powers over evaluating federal employment opportunities for women. The memo includes actions he has taken with the Civil Service Commission and the intent behind his actions.

## TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TEKS)

### SOCIAL STUDIES

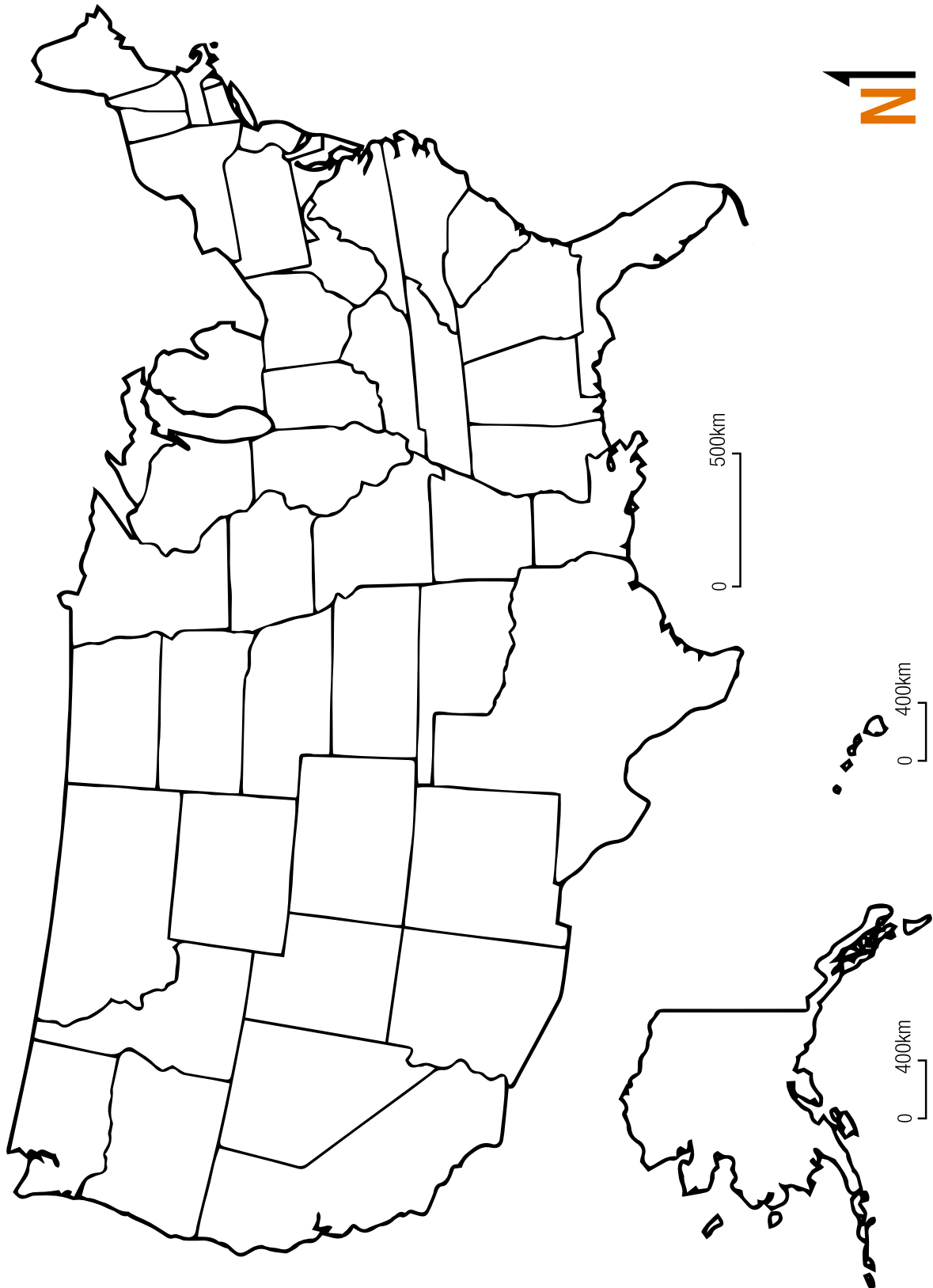
- §113.31 (c) (21) (E)** evaluate economic data using charts, tables, graphs, and maps.
- §113.41 (c) (6) (A)** analyze the causes and effects of events and social issues such as immigration, Social Darwinism, the Scopes Trial, eugenics, race relations, nativism, the Red Scare, Prohibition, and the changing role of women.
- §113.41 (c) (9) (A)** trace the historical development of the civil rights movement from the late 1800s through the 21st century, including the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th amendments.
- §113.41 (c) (9) (C)** describe the roles of political organizations that promoted African American, Chicano, American Indian, and women's civil rights.
- §113.41 (c) (17) (D)** identify the actions and outcomes of government policies intended to create economic opportunities for citizens such as the Great Society, affirmative action, and Title IX.
- §113.41 (c) (25) (C)** explain actions taken by people to expand economic opportunities and political rights for racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups in American society.
- §113.43 (c) (17) (C)** compare economic, political, or social opportunities for underrepresented populations such as women and ethnic and religious minorities.
- §113.44 (c) (2) (B)** analyze the impact of political changes brought about by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media, past and present.
- §113.44 (c) (16) (B)** explain changes in American culture brought about by government policies such as voting rights, GI Bill of Rights, Immigration and Nationality Act, Immigration Reform and Control Act, affirmative action, and racial integration.
- §113.45 (c) (13) (B)** explore the nature and effects of bias and discrimination.
- §113.46 (c) (5) (D)** examine counterculture movements and analyze their impact on society as a whole.
- §113.46 (c) (8) (B)** analyze the traditional roles of work and how the composition of the labor force has changed in the United States.
- §113.46 (c) (12) (A)** analyze how gender roles affect the opportunities available to men and women in society.

## C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS: COLLEGE, CAREER & CIVIC LIFE

- D2.Civ.14.9-12.** Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- D2.Eco.1.9-12.** Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.
- D2.Geo.2.9-12.** Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.
- D2.His.1.9-12.** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical context.
- D2.His.2.9-12.** Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.
- D2.His.3.9-12.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by historical context.

# APPENDIX A

## Blank map of the United States of America





# APPENDIX B

## Breaking Down Statistics Handout

Use the tables below to gather and organize the data you are researching relating to the gender wage gap.

TABLE 1 | WAGE GAP BASED ON GENDER

Gender	Year: _____ Annual Earnings	Monetary Difference	Percentage Difference
Male			
Female			

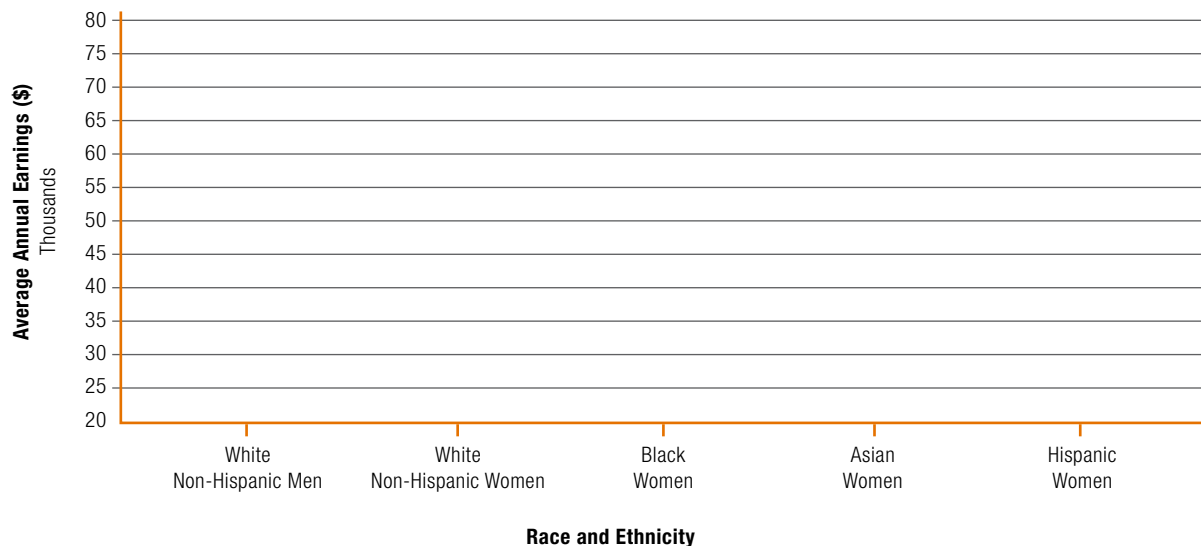
TABLE 2 | WAGE GAP OVER TIME

Gender	Year: _____	Year: _____	Year: _____	Average Monetary Difference	Average Percentage Difference
Male					
Female					

### EARNINGS CHART

Create a bar graph below to reflect the data of average annual earnings of women of varying races and ethnicities compared to that of White, Non-Hispanic Men.

Average Annual Earnings by Race and Ethnicity





# APPENDIX C

## Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions

Use the questions below to guide your analysis of the primary source.

### MEETING AND GREETING THE PRIMARY SOURCE

**Type** (check all that apply)

- |                                    |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter    | <input type="checkbox"/> Email         | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chart     | <input type="checkbox"/> Patent        | <input type="checkbox"/> Presidential Document   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech    | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional Document  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Report    | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram      | <input type="checkbox"/> Identification Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum    | <input type="checkbox"/> Court Document          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other     |  |  |

**Write 2-3 sentences describing the document.** Pretend the person you are explaining it to cannot see the document. (Think about characteristics like handwritten vs. typed, one or more than one author, stamps, markings, or anything unique about the document).

### BASIC SOURCE PARTS

**Complete the right side of the table for the primary source.**

Who was the author / creator?	
Who was the reader / receiver?	
When was it from?	
Where was it from?	

### MAKING SENSE OF THE PRIMARY SOURCE

**Write 1-2 sentences describing what this primary source is about.**

**Who was the intended audience of this primary source?**

### USE AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

**What was happening during this time? Does the primary source mention and specific people or events of the period?**

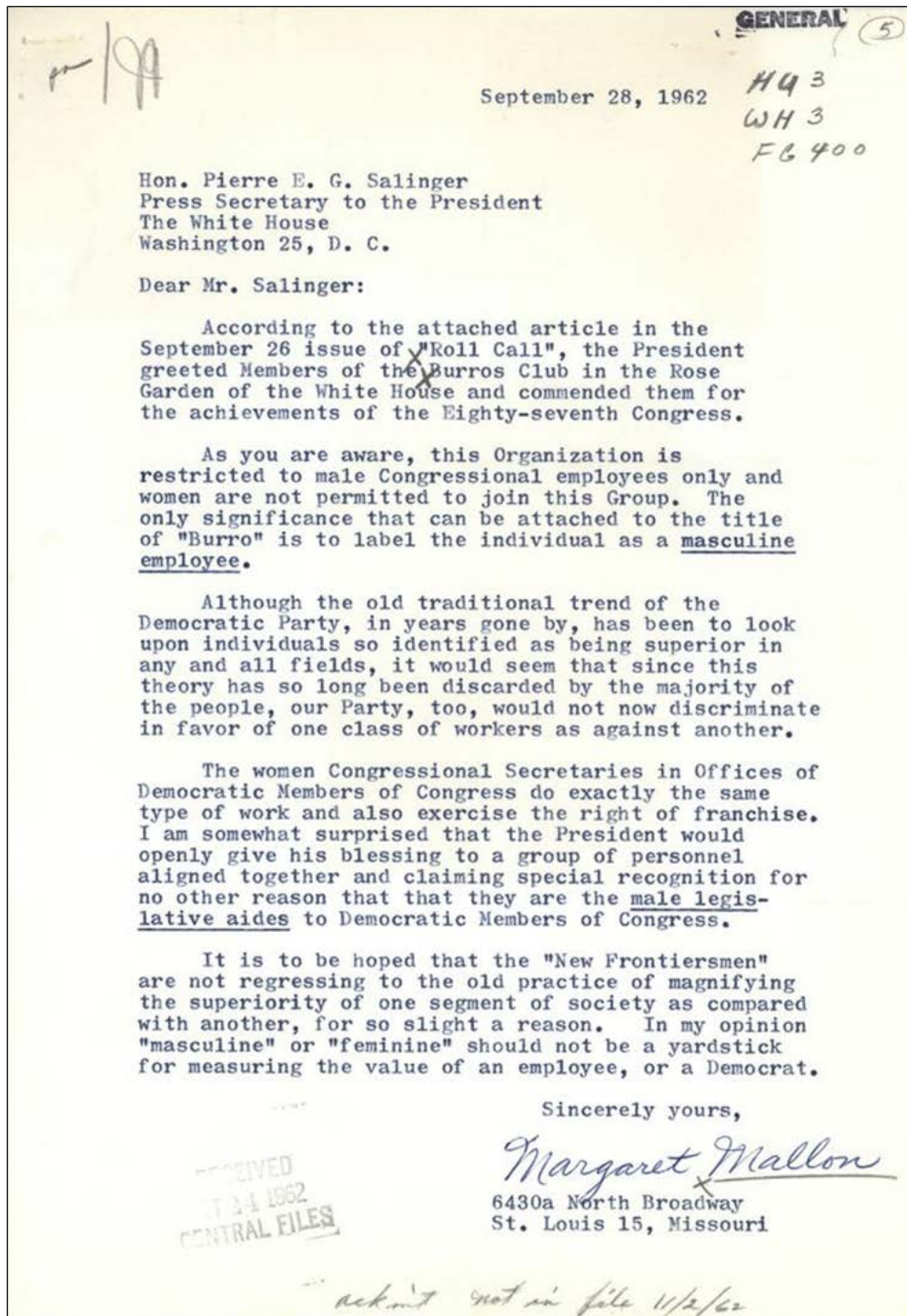
**What other primary or secondary sources could be used to help you better understand this event or topic?**

**If someone made this primary source today, what would be different and the same? Why?**

## APPENDIX D

### Margaret Mallon Letter to President Kennedy, September 28, 1962

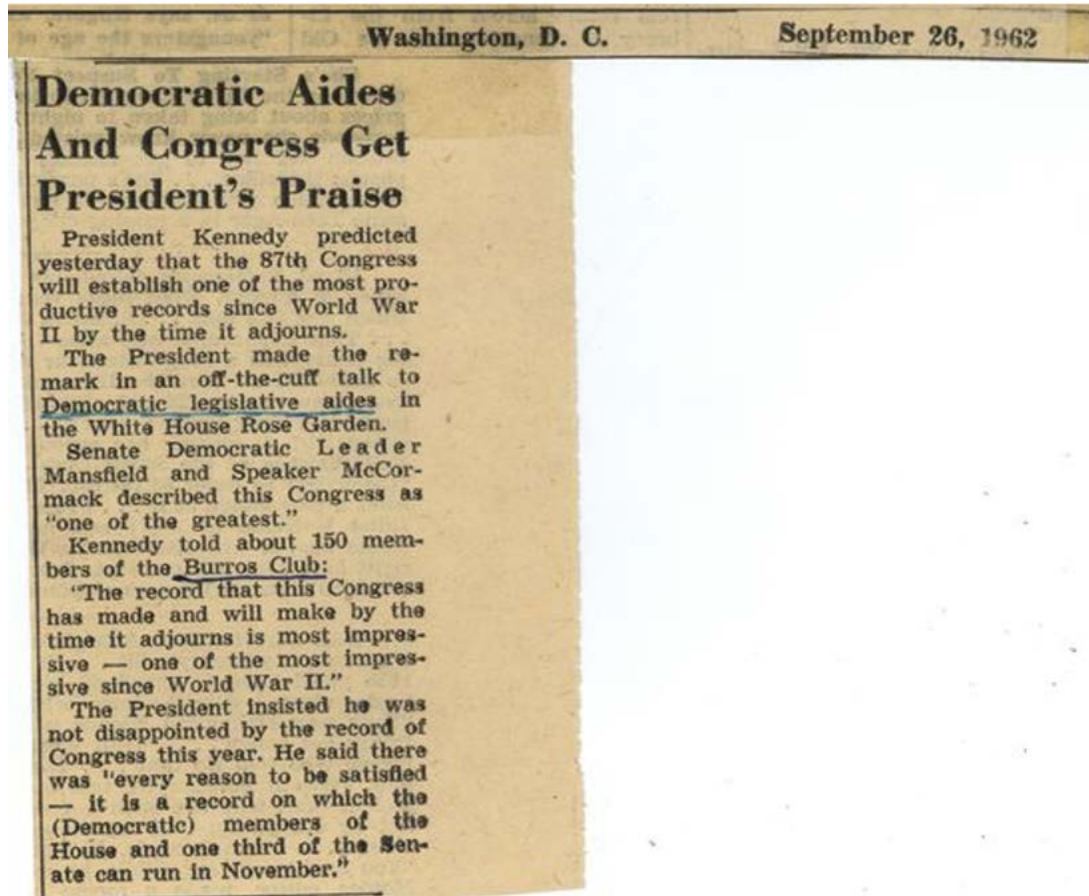
Read the following letter and newspaper clipping. Use the [Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions Handout](#) to help you analyze the primary source(s).



John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

## APPENDIX D continued

“Democratic Aides and Congress Get President’s Praise” from *Roll Call* newspaper. This is the article referenced in the Margaret Mallon letter.



Democratic Aides And Congress Get President's Praise. (1962). *Roll Call*, 8(15), 1-1.

Retrieved 2023, from [jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHCSF/0374/JFKWHCSF-0374-014](https://jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHCSF/0374/JFKWHCSF-0374-014)

John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

# APPENDIX E

## Newspaper Clippings

Read newspaper clippings below. Use the [Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions Handout](#) to help you analyze the primary source(s).

“Kennedy Backs Equal Rights for Women” from *The Washington Post*.

“President Signs Equal-Pay Bill” from *Evening Star*.

THE WASHINGTON POST Tuesday, October 25, 1960

# Kennedy Backs Equal Rights For Women

By Marie Smith

SEN. JOHN F. KENNEDY, the Democratic presidential candidate, has bolstered his bid for women's votes in the Nov. 8 election by announcing his support of an equal rights amendment to the Constitution.



Miss Smith

It is the first time the Massachusetts Democrat has given his endorsement to the proposed amendment which has the backing of more than 40 national women's organizations. The amendment has been before Congress many times but was never passed by both Houses.

Kennedy endorsed it in a letter to Emma Guffey Miller, chairman of the National Woman's Party and a prominent Democrat from Pennsylvania.

The letter said: "You have my assurance that I will interpret the Democratic platform, as I know it is intended, to bring about through concrete actions, including the adoption of the Equal Rights for Women amendment, the full equality for women which advocates of the Equal Rights

Amendment have always sought."

The Democratic platform, the letter continued, "well phrased our objective: 'We support legislation which will guarantee to women equality of rights under the law, including equal pay for equal work.' There should be no 'artificial and arbitrary barriers to employment based on age, race, sex, religion or national origin' . . .

"As you know, I have long been convinced that discrimination in any form is contrary to the American philosophy of government. It is a basic tenet of democracy to grant equal rights to all, regardless of race, creed, color or sex. This should be true even if there were no constitutional amendment dealing with the subject.

"Forty years ago women received the right to vote. It is long past the time when similar equal rights should be granted in other fields."

REPUBLICANS immediately called Kennedy's endorsement of the amendment a "masterpiece of hindsight." Clare B. Williams, assistant chairman of the Republican National Committee, pointed out that "Vice President Richard M. Nixon announced his full support for this proposal on Sept. 2."

# President Signs Equal-Pay Bill

By the Associated Press  
President Kennedy signed yesterday a bill providing equal pay for women and said it gives them "the same rights at the working place . . . that they have enjoyed at the polling place."

He said the new law, sought for 18 years by women leaders, will help correct "the unconscionable practice" of paying female employees

lower wages than males for the same job.

However, the President noted, much still remains to be done to achieve full economic opportunity.

As he signed the bill with 19 pens in his White House office, President Kennedy took the opportunity to urge more day-care centers for children of working mothers

and increased tax deductions for such care.

At present, he said, all the licensed day-care centers in the Nation can take care of only 185,000 children and nearly 500,000 children under 12 must take care of themselves while their mothers work.

"This, it seems to me, is a formula for disaster," the President said.

Turning to the group of influential Congress members clustered about him, President Kennedy endorsed an \$8-million item for this purpose in the 1964 budget of the Health, Education and Welfare Department.

"We also need the provisions in the tax bill that will permit working mothers to increase the deduction from income tax liability for costs incurred in providing care for their children while the mothers are working," he said.

The new equal-pay law will go into effect within a year. But, where collective bargaining contracts are involved, it may take two years.

The 27 million workers covered by present minimum wage law provisions are covered by the equal-pay act. Labor Department spokesmen estimate some 8 million women will be affected.

Hotels, motels, restaurants, small retail business, laundry and agricultural workers are not included, however.

There is an express provision which prohibits an employer from reducing wages of other employees to achieve equal pay, and no employee may be fired or discriminated against because of the filing of a complaint under the new law.

Associated Press, (Ed.). (1963, June 11). President Signs Equal-Pay Bill. *Evening Star*, pp. D-4.

Retrieved 2023, from [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lcn/sn83045462/1963-06-11/ed-1/seq-46/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lcn/sn83045462/1963-06-11/ed-1/seq-46/)

Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress.

Smith, M. (1960, October 25). *Kennedy Backs Equal Rights For Women*. *The Washington Post*.

Retrieved 2023, from [jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHCSF/0374/JFKWHCSF-0374-014](https://jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHCSF/0374/JFKWHCSF-0374-014)

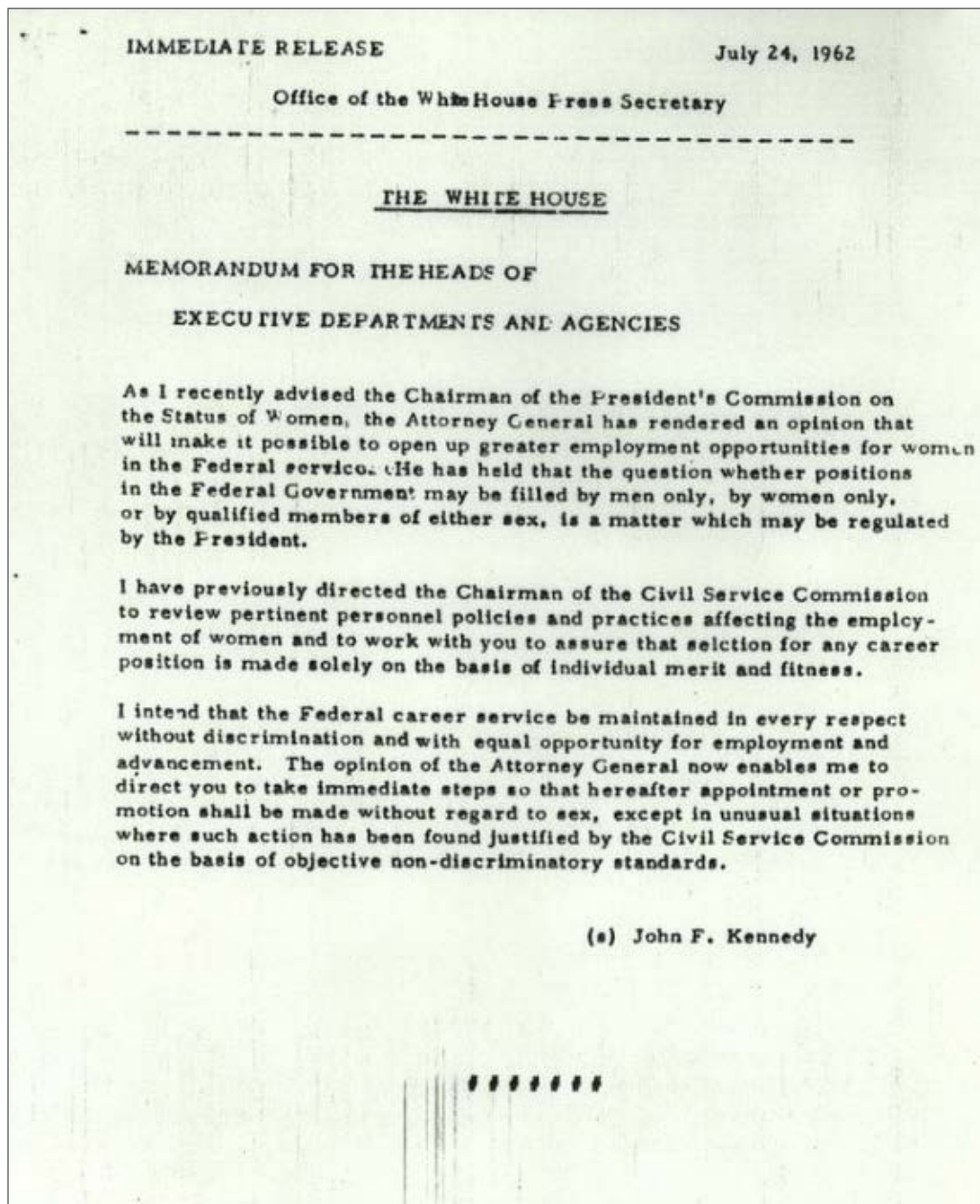
John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.



## APPENDIX F

### President Kennedy's Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, July 24, 1962

Read the press release below. Use the [Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions Handout](#) to help you analyze the primary source(s).



*John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.*