



## Lilly Ledbetter

Lilly Ledbetter had a story to tell. In fact you have already heard it. They've been telling it in Congress, in the Supreme Court, in corporate boardrooms, in newspapers and on televisions across the nation. It has been said, at least one book or movie is being considered to retell her story. In 1979, Ledbetter took a job at the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company plant in Gadsden, Alabama. At the Beginning of her career there, despite being the only woman in her position, Ledbetter was given the same starting salary as her male colleagues. Over the next 19 years she not only gained new skills and experience in her supervisory role, she also helped train a number of new hires, all men. In 1996 she received a "Top Performer" award for her contribution to the company.

In March 1998, Ledbetter inquired into the possible sexual discrimination of the Goodyear Tire Company. In July she filed formal charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity commission. In November 1998, after early retirement, Ledbetter sued claiming pay discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. She started with the same pay but by retirement, she was earning \$3,727 per month compared to 15 men who earned from \$4,286. Per month (lowest paid man) to \$5,236. Per month (highest paid man). The Supreme Court did not rule on whether this was discrimination, just the statute of limitations to sue.

*Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 550 U.S. 618 (2007), is an employment discrimination decision of the Supreme Court of the United States. Justice Alito held for the five-justice majority that employers cannot be sued under Title VII of the Civil rights Act over race or gender pay discrimination if the claims are based on decisions made by the employer 180 days ago or more. The decision did not prevent plaintiffs from suing under other laws, like the Equal Pay Act, which has a three-year deadline for most sex discrimination claims or 42 U.S. C. 1981, which has a four-year deadline for suing over race discrimination.

This was a case of statutory rather than constitutional interpretation. The plaintiff in this case, Lilly Ledbetter, characterized her situation as one where "disparate pay is received during the statutory limitations period, but is the result of intentionally discriminatory, pay decisions that occurred outside the limitations period." In rejecting Ledbetter's appeal, the Supreme court said that "she could have, and should have sued" when the pay decisions were made instead of waiting beyond the 180 -day statutory charging period. The court did leave open the possibility that a plaintiff could sue beyond the 180 day if she did not and could not, have discovered the discrimination earlier. The effect of the Court's holding was reversed by the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009. President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law on January 29, 2009.

In May 2010 CUNY School of Law presented, Ms. Lilly Ledbetter an Honorary Doctor of Law degree.

On September 30, 2011 Ms. Ledbetter was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame 2011. She was one of eleven American women who have made valuable and enduring contributions to the nation.