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# Women Challenge Candidates to Close Gender Pay Gap

DENVER – Colorado women have a message for presidential candidates coming to the CU–Boulder campus for Wednesday's debate: "We want equal pay."

The [Women's Foundation of Colorado](#) is releasing a report today on the status of women in the state's economy.

Alison Friedman, manager of the foundation's community initiatives and investments, says she's hopeful to hear any candidate – from any political party – talk about closing the pay gap between women and men.

"Women in Colorado earn 80 cents on the dollar," she says. "Black women earn only 65 cents, and Latino women in Colorado earn only 53 cents on the dollar as compared to their white male counterparts."

The foundation report lays out [specific recommendations](#) to achieve economic equality, including new legislation, enforcing existing rules and carving out more educational opportunities for the state's girls and young women. Friedman says if action isn't taken, the study projects Colorado women will have to wait until 2057 to earn the same as men.

Friedman adds that closing the gender pay gap would cut Colorado's poverty rate for all working women in half, and would inject more than \$9 billion into the state's economy annually.

She says one easy fix the report calls for is restoring the state's Pay Equity Commission. The commission – killed in the last legislative session – educated employers on how unequal pay happens, and offered best practices for creating a level playing field for all workers.

"An employer should be held accountable for gender and race disparities in hiring, compensation and in promotions," she says. "They should really be able to examine their internal policies and the way that they do things as a business."

The study calls for reducing financial barriers and other hurdles for women of all ethnicities to post-secondary education – and according to Friedman, keeping girls involved in science, technology, engineering and math can lead to higher-paying jobs.

The report also recommends expanding access to the [Colorado Child Care Assistance Program](#) and other subsidies. Friedman says she'll be watching on Wednesday, along with future debates by both parties, for any signs women won't have to wait another 40 years to earn the same as men.

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