

House bill seeks equal pay for equal work

State Reps. Ruggiero, Donovan cite stats that women make 86 cents for every \$1 a man makes.

By Matt Sheley
Staff writer

State Reps. Deborah Ruggiero and Susan Donovan said it's hard to believe in 2018, men and women sometimes don't get paid the same for the same work. But that's exactly what the statistics show in many instances. It's a situation the Democratic legislators want to fix.

Ruggiero, D-Jamestown, recently signed onto Donovan's "Equal Pay Act of 2018" as a co-sponsor to try to eliminate the

pay gap and other inequities in the workplace.

The bill (H7427) in the House of Representatives would give more teeth to existing pay and gender laws, they said. For example, they said it would be illegal to pay anyone less than a white man is paid without clearly documenting a noteworthy difference in skills.

The legislation also clarifies the definition of "comparable work" and requires employees with "substantially similar" skills and experience be paid the same, even if every requirement of their jobs aren't exactly alike.

The bill would remove provisions barring employees from discussing their pay, prevent potential employers from asking an applicant his or her



Ruggiero



Donovan

salary history and require a salary range be included with any job posting.

"It is illegal in Rhode Island to pay women, minorities and even men less for the same work, but this bill takes it a few steps further," Ruggiero told The Daily News. "Compensation should be based on ability, not gender or other factors, and the business leaders I've spoken with don't want their wives, daughters and sisters getting

paid less for the same work."

Donovan, D-Bristol, has dealt with the issue firsthand and heard from others who have been affected by pay inequity.

"I was a 22-year-old teaching physical education in a small, rural community in New Hampshire and was also serving as the field hockey coach," said Donovan, whose district includes part of Portsmouth. "One day, I got to talking to the men's soccer coach and it came out that he was making double what I was for doing the same job with the same experience, riding the same buses, using the same fields and on the same practice schedule. I went to the administration and complained about it and I was told the reason he got more was

because boys sports were better attended and he deserved more money."

That was more than 40 years ago. But fast forward to recent days, and an attorney who recently went from the nonprofit field into a private firm relayed a similar tale, Donovan said.

"I was in an elevator with this attorney and she felt like she had to say something after hearing about the bill," Donovan said. "She said she had been with nonprofits so long and when she got an offer, she just took it because it was more than what she had been making, only to find out that her male colleagues were making \$50,000 more for the same job with the same level of experience. Sure, she should have

negotiated better, but that kind of discrepancy has got to stop."

According to statistics provided by Ruggiero and Donovan, the inequity they've heard about and seen is very real.

Although the state first passed laws in 1946 making it illegal for women to earn less than men, current figures show that females in Rhode Island on average make 86 cents for every \$1 their male counterparts earn.

They said the numbers are worse for minority women, who on average earn 58 cents for every dollar a white man earns. For Latina women, it's 51 cents for every \$1 for white men.

The state of Massachusetts recently passed similar

EQUAL A5



Dance fever

Dancing at the Forty Steps helped kick off Newport Irish Heritage Month on Sunday in Newport. The annual dance keeps alive a tradition of the Irish of Newport in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who would meet at the Forty Steps on the Cliff Walk for music and dancing.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians Men Singers, pictured lower right, perform Sunday during the event. For a calendar of Newport Irish Heritage Month events, Page A5.

Dave Hansen | Staff photos



TIVERTON

Conversations scheduled in search for new school chief

By Marcia Pobeznik
Correspondent

Two community input sessions have been slated for next Tuesday and Wednesday by the consultant hired to conduct a search for a new school superintendent.

Joseph Erardi Jr., who was hired in early January, will host "Community Conversation: Your Voice Matters — Selecting the Tiverton Superintendent of Schools," on Tuesday and Wednesday night in the high school library at 7 p.m.

Erardi, a resident of Connecticut and a retired superintendent who started a consulting business five years ago, already has met with a number of groups of Tiverton teachers at all levels and office staff to garner their input. Comments also are being sought from parent-teacher organizations at the schools and the general public.

His guided conversations focus on things like what character traits and skills the next superintendent should possess.

"I want to make sure everybody has the opportunity to share a thought," Erardi said. He also will be in town on Thursday to meet with more faculty.

"I want to ensure the School Committee that every voice that wanted to be heard is heard," Erardi said.

People who are not comfortable speaking in a public meeting can contact Erardi directly to talk over the phone to share their thoughts. He said he always returns calls and can be reached at (203) 598-6986.

Erardi did not say how many have applied for the post. "I like the pool of applicants and I am confident the next superintendent is in that pool," Erardi said. Typically 12 to 20 apply for such a position, Erardi said, and he expects that number, or more, when the deadline for applications closes March 16.

The advertisement the School Committee approved seeks "a strong visionary leader to guide its schools. Defining attributes of this individual must include: The ability to oversee and enhance teaching and learning in a highly regarded PK-12 district; The daily practice and demonstration of high moral and ethical character traits which will enhance school culture and climate for students success; A communication skillset which will engage multiple community stakeholders; A genuine desire to make a difference in the life of every Tiverton Public School students."

The information gathered at the community sessions will be presented to the School Committee soon after the deadline for applications, Erardi said.

The information will help him to formulate questions the School Committee can ask the candidates during the interview process.

"It's a process I know will end with the school board proud of their next superintendent," Erardi said.

Superintendent William Rearick, who has been in the job for 15 years, signed a separation agreement with the School Committee in July 2017 that sets his retirement date at June 30, 2019, but the town would pay him his full salary even if a new superintendent is hired before that date.

A new superintendent could be on the job by July 1.

Tiverton@NewportRI.com

'I like the pool of applicants and I am confident the next superintendent is in that pool.'

JOSEPH ERARDI JR.

consultant hired to help find Tiverton's next superintendent

Middletown duo kicks off tour with band Blind Revision

'The Ashes Tour', which started March 2, will hit places in New England and mid-Atlantic states

By Laura Damon
Staff writer

A band with members who have roots in Newport County will kick off an East Coast tour this month.

Jamie Steele and Kirk Scully, both of Middletown, are members of the female-fronted hard-rock band Blind Revision. The band formed in the summer of 2013. Steele plays the

drums and Scully the guitar.

Steele and Scully, both 25, have been friends for years. They both graduated from Middletown High School in 2010.

Blind Revision draws influences from bands like Evanescence and Coheed and Cambria. Jen Janet, Blind Revision's main vocalist, "puts an interesting twist on what we do," Steele said.

In April 2017, Blind Revision was

nominated for two Worcester Music Awards: Best rock act and best hardcore act. The band has performed at festivals such as the Rock and Shock in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Goddesses of Rock Festival in Rhode Island and the 2017 Connecticut Metal Festival.

"The Ashes Tour" originally was scheduled to kick off on March 2 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but that

date was canceled because of weather conditions. Now the tour stops include venues in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

In a phone interview with The Daily News, Steele and Scully agreed they were the most excited to play at Alchemy in Providence, for the hometown feel. "The Ashes Tour" is the band's third tour of this scale,

they said.

Outside of playing gigs, Steele divides his time between the Guitar Center in Warwick and Naval Station Newport. Scully is a cook, server and bartender at Griswold's Tavern.

Asked what was the best show they've played, the bandmates cited an October show in Worcester where they opened for Motionless in White

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