

# How We Know Comparable Worth is Worth It

By Lois Haignere

In 1987 comparable worth adjustments (reclassification to higher salary grades based on the gender/race predominance of those in job titles) were made to 239 NYS job titles. Over 47,000 employees received raises.

Let's look at just 6 of these job titles and imagine the impact on the lives and families of those receiving these increments.

## 1987 Comparable Worth Adjustments - Selected NYS Civil Service Titles

Title	Number in Job Title in 1987	Before Salary Grade	After Salary Grade	Before Salary Grade Job Rate	After Salary Grade Job Rate	One Year Salary Increase at Job Rate	Estimated* Income Gain Per Person After 20 Yrs
Library Clerk2	208	7	9	\$18,449	\$20,521	\$2,072	\$55,675
Library Clerk3	45	11	14	\$22,946	\$27,033	\$4,087	\$109,819
Food Service Worker 2	813	7	9	\$18,449	\$20,521	\$2,072	\$55,675
Food Service Worker 3	57	9	13	\$20,521	\$25,585	\$5,064	\$136,072
File Clerk, Typist, Clerk	6325	3	6	\$15,071	\$17,472	\$2,401	\$64,516
Principle Clerk	372	11	14	\$22,946	\$27,033	\$4,087	\$109,819

\*Includes a 3% across-the-board annual increase

The chart above shows that 208 people working in the job title Library Clerk 2 were raised from salary grade 7 to salary grade 9 increasing their income by over \$2000 a year for an estimated 20 years income gain of over **\$55,000**. But the Library Clerk 3 job title was found to have even more salary disparity and was raised from salary grade 11 to 14 for an annual increase of over \$4000 and a 20 year estimated income gain of over **\$109,000**. The same patterns are true for the Food Service job titles. Three 1987 clerical job titles, File Clerk, Typist and Clerk were raised from salary grade 3 to 6, increasing the salaries of over 6000 state employees by more than \$2400 a year for an estimated 20 year income gain of more than **\$64,000**. Maybe these pay equity adjustments made it possible for someone to buy their own home or put a child through college.

The state can be proud that it made these salary corrections 20 years ago and so can the counties, cities and school districts that also made pay equity adjustments 20 years ago. But many counties, cities and school districts *did not make adjustments* then and have not done so since. What about the library and food service workers and clerks employed in these sites? How much have they lost? What about all those in the private sector? Those who received no comparable worth adjustments 20 years ago have been and are being short changed daily out of both money and the related feelings of value and self esteem.

And, *because there has been no legislation requiring it*, the State and most if not all of the rest of the public sector in NYS have not restudied the issue in over 20 years. Biases can seep back into salaries over time if there are no systems in place to prevent it. Without legal protections the pressures of business as usual, prejudice and greed will prevail as surely as our bridges and infrastructure will deteriorate and collapse without maintenance.