



News Release

News Release No. 18

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24 March 2011

'Team APG' Celebrates Women's History Month

Lilly Ledbetter Shares Experiences Fighting for Women's Rights, Equal Pay

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — Lilly Ledbetter, a woman who tirelessly fought for nine years to earn a fair salary in the workplace, spent March 24 at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. (APG) sharing her story as part of the installation's celebration of Women's History Month. Planned by the APG Federal Women's Program committee, the event was sponsored by Team APG, the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) and the U.S. Army Materiel Systems Analysis Activity (AMSAA).

"I'm not anyone special," Ledbetter said, comparing herself to great women in history. "Rosa [Parks] stood up for her seat, I stood up for my pay."

Her journey for equality began nearly two decades after taking a job at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant in Gadsden, Ala., when Ledbetter learned she was earning less pay than her male counterparts. Citing the *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Equal Pay Act of 1963*, Ledbetter sued the company claiming pay discrimination.

Though the courts originally awarded her \$360,000, the decision was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2007. Ultimately, Ledbetter received no compensation but she vowed to make a difference and fight for women, their families and future generations so others would not have to experience the hardships she had endured.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling, a reporter asked Ledbetter if she understood defeat, to which she replied, "I understand defeat but I just couldn't live with myself if I didn't do something about it. I stood up for myself, my daughter, my granddaughter and all the other women in this country that have had to make tough choices and sometimes do without to support their families."

In 2009, President Obama signed into law the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which expands women's rights to fair compensation in the workplace.

Ledbetter is one of 35 people in history with a law named after her and the only person from Alabama. She believes that three things enabled her to persevere through her nearly nine-year journey — being a strong person, trusting in a higher power and having a family that supported her through it all.

“Ms. Ledbetter’s bravery, tenacity and perseverance through her ordeal should be commended,” said Eric Grove, acting chief of staff at AMSAA. “Her fight truly made a difference to our nation and has had a tremendous impact on our history.”

As a take away from her experience, Ledbetter encouraged women to be sure that they are compensated fairly, promoted when it’s deserved and offered all of the same training and advantages given to men. Additionally, she encouraged those present to take an interest in the nation’s politics and get to know their representatives to keep them accountable.

“I thank Washington for putting me in the history books,” Ledbetter said. “I didn’t get any money, but I got to make a difference in history.”

Later this year, Ledbetter will be inducted into the Women’s Hall of Fame in recognition of her fight for other women to receive fair pay.

“I’m awe struck with the energy, tenacity and sheer grit it took to do what Lilly has done for future generations,” ECBC Technical Director Joseph Wienand said.

For more information about ECBC, visit <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/>.

ECBC is the Army’s principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and field operations. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for the warfighter and for our national defense, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. Located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., ECBC is a U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command laboratory. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our web site at <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/> or call (410) 436-7718.