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PRESS RELEASE

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EEOC CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT HEARING 4/10/08

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is being recalled before a House oversight Subcommittee for a hearing on April 10, 2008. The hearing will focus on the agency's budget request for the upcoming fiscal year 2009. After last year's oversight hearing, the Subcommittee decided to cut off funding for a failed experiment to outsource calls to the EEOC to scripted operators at a contract call center.

According to Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, which represents EEOC's employees, "We are pleased that the Subcommittee is keeping close tabs on the critical situation at the EEOC. Last year the Subcommittee called on EEOC to make investments to reduce a sky-rocketing backlog, including hiring permanent frontline staff. However, since last year's hearing, the case backlog rose 37% to 54,000 and staffing has continued to decline. EEOC actually ended FY07 with two-hundred employees under its staffing ceiling. We are hoping that the oversight panel asks Chair Earp some tough questions about why EEOC ignored its instructions."

In fact, since 2001, EEOC has lost over 25% of its workforce to a multi-year hiring freeze. EEOC is now down to only 2,137 employees nationwide. EEOC's year-end performance statistics for 2007 demonstrate that the shrinking workforce is taking its toll on the ability of the agency to effectively assist the public. In addition to increasing backlogs, average case processing time continues to rise. Victims of discrimination are now forced to wait on EEOC's help for almost 199 days, which is almost 7 months. According to Martin, "Instead of a leaner, meaner EEOC, starving the agency has resulted in a toothless tiger."

At last year's hearing, Chair Earp actually fought against getting a budget increase. Despite this Subcommittee's efforts to increase EEOC's budget, Chair Earp got her wish. Martin says that "Since last year, the situation has only worsened for the EEOC and the public it serves. This year the EEOC is finally facing reality and requesting a 4% budget increase. Unfortunately, this simply is not enough to turn things around after five years of flat budgets. This is why the Council supports the \$50 million increase passed by the Senate last year."

EEOC's oversight hearing will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday April 10, 2008, H-310 Capitol, before the Commerce, Justice and State Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations.