

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EEOC LOCALS No 216, AFGE, AFL-CIO

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PRESS RELEASE

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EEOC EMPLOYEES' UNION WILL TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS 4/2/08

Rachel Shonfield, Legislative Coordinator the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, will testify before Congress on April 2, 2008, regarding the budget and staffing crises Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The Council represents the investigators, attorneys, administrative judges, paralegals, mediators, and support staff in 53 EEOC offices located around the country.

Shonfield plans to tell EEOC's House appropriations oversight subcommittee that, "EEOC is down to a skeleton crew of dedicated employees, who despite their best efforts cannot keep up with the important work of the civil rights agency." Since 2001, EEOC has lost 25% of its workforce to a multi-year hiring freeze. EEOC rarely replaces these departing employees. EEOC's FY07 year end statistics demonstrate that staffing losses have resulted in staggering backlogs and longer case processing times. Fiscal year 2008 marks the fifth year the EEOC is limping along on flat funding.

According to Shonfield, "By the time EEOC gets to their cases, often workers have been forced to suffer additional discrimination or they've been forced off the job. EEOC hampers its investigations because witnesses are no longer available or memories have faded. I am thankful to Congress for the opportunity to shine a light on these victims of workplace discrimination, for whom justice delayed is justice denied."

EEOC's own Office of Inspector General has noted that "the Agency is challenged in accomplishing its mission of promoting equality of opportunity in the workforce and enforcing Federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination due to a reduced workforce and an increasing backlog of pending cases."

According to Shonfield, "Adequate civil rights funding and a priority on replenishing frontline staff must be put in place to plug the hole in EEOC's sinking ship." The position of the Council is that last year's effort by the Senate to increase EEOC's funding by \$50 million is what is needed to repair years of flat budgets and staffing shortages.

EEOC's oversight hearing will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday April 2, 2008, Room H-309 of the U.S. Capitol, before the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations.