

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EEOC LOCALS No 216, AFGE, AFL-CIO
Office of the President
c/o Denver District Office, EEOC
303 East 17th Avenue, Suite 510, Denver, Colorado 80203
Tele: (303)866-1337 Fax: (303)736-3964
www.council216.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Gabrielle Martin
(303)725-9079

EEOC'S "STRATEGIC" PLAN FAILS THE PUBLIC

It is now clear that the public cannot rely on the floundering Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to even draw up a plan for preventing discrimination in the workplace. On July 28, 2008, by a 3-2 vote along party lines, the EEOC approved a "Strategic Plan" that sets unrealistic case processing quotas that cannot be met by the short-staffed agency. According to Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals No. 216, the union representing EEOC's bargaining unit employees, "The strategy of the plan is to create a totally dysfunctional agency."

The dwindling number of employees left at the under funded EEOC toil under the worst working conditions - too much work on any given day, a growing backlog, archaic computer and information systems, and now impossible case processing requirements. Martin says, "While EEOC's employees suffer, the public takes the greatest hit. The public trusts EEOC to put in place policies and procedures that help ensure that workplaces are free from illegal discrimination and if not, violators will be prosecuted. These 'strategic' goals will prevent that."

EEOC's strategic plan demoralizes the very staff on whom the public must rely. The Administrative Judges who process the federal sector cases were told to close 50 percent of their cases within 180 days. With only 90 days left in the fiscal year, the only way that number can be met is to dump cases.

Employees who process the private sector cases are pushed as well. These employees are carrying about a 100 cases in their workloads, but still cannot make a dent in a 60,000 case backlog. In addition, EEOC cannot keep pace with the number of contacts from the public that offices now receive via phone, mail and the internet. Martin says, "I think that is why EEOC's strategic plan acknowledges that EEOC can process only about 50 percent of its cases in a reasonable amount of time. But with even less staff than last year, realistically, that goal may not be met. That is not acceptable for either the employees or the public."

Martin notes that in recent years EEOC typically has refused to request necessary funding or staffing from Congress, but this year the agency did request a nominal 5% increase. Even so, the Council is seeking additional oversight, since EEOC typically has not used appropriated funds to hire front line staff. Rather, EEOC has allowed the loss of 25% of its workforce, which has caused the case backlog to mushroom. "The strategy that is needed to best serve the public is to hire staff. Instead EEOC is concocting unsustainable production quotas, which are not backed up by resources," Martin concludes.