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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2008

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UN-HAPPY FISCAL NEW YEAR!

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), like the rest of the Federal Government, rings in a new fiscal year today. Unfortunately, fiscal year 2009 (FY09) promises more of the same challenges for the beleaguered civil rights agency – frozen budgets, dwindling staff, and a ballooning workload. Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, which represents the agency’s employees, states, “Ring in the new fiscal year at the EEOC is a sober occasion, because each year it gets increasingly harder to serve our customers without the needed resources.”

EEOC starts its sixth year of frozen budgets today:

Five years of frozen budgets have taken a toll on the EEOC. Now a continuing resolution until March 2009, means EEOC will spend at least half of a sixth year without a budget increase that even accounts for inflation. According to Martin, “EEOC has the opportunity to seek additional funding for the continuing resolution. Given the EEOC’s track record, we are not optimistic.”

EEOC has lost 25% of its staff:

EEOC has lost one quarter of its workforce since 2002, ending FY07 with a paltry 2,157 employees nationwide. Congress chided EEOC for wasting the slots it authorized by not hiring to the staffing ceiling of 2,381. Nevertheless, Martin predicts that when the agency releases its staffing data for FY08, once again EEOC will have lost even more employees.

EEOC has lost the battle to keep up with its workload:

Martin states, “The work keeps growing even though the workforce is shrinking.” EEOC reported a backlog of 39,946 cases in FY06 which worsened to a backlog of 54,970 cases in FY07. EEOC anticipates the FY08 backlog will grow to 66,976 cases. However, based on quarterly reports, Martin predicts that the backlog actually will reach at least 70,000 cases outstanding at the end of the year. “The old adage ‘justice delayed is justice denied’ sums up what is happening to the people who filed these aging charges of discrimination,” says Martin.

Good news could still be attainable in fiscal year 2009:

The good news is that once the budget process resumes, an increase could finally be on the way. The House has recommended \$350 million for the EEOC, which would be a \$20 million increase. The Senate is recommending \$342 million, which was equal to the President’s request. Martin says, “The Union’s new year’s wish is for Congress to adopt the \$350 million figure to make up for over five years of frozen budgets. We hope the new year will bring us the resources to do our important work of protecting Americans against discrimination on the job.”

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