

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

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Omnibus Budget Bill Gives EEOC A Down Payment On a Much Needed Increase: EEOC Union's Survey Demonstrates Sad State of EEOC After Five Years of Frozen Budgets

The \$15 million increase for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), contained in the fiscal year 2009 Omnibus budget bill, will provide much needed resources to the beleaguered civil rights agency. Since 2001, the EEOC has lost 25% of its workforce, mostly impacting frontline positions that directly serve the public. At the same time EEOC received 95,402 charges of discrimination in FY08, the greatest in its history. As a result, the number of backlogged cases has skyrocketed to 73,951. This is a 35% jump from the previous year's backlog of 54,970. The suffering public must wait, on average, almost eight months for help.

According to Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, the union representing employees at the EEOC, "If the increase is used to replace lost frontline staff, then workers who have experienced discrimination should begin to get the help that they need faster." The Council had supported the original House version for EEOC's budget of \$350 million. While the \$15 million is above the former administration's request, it represents a mere 5% increase after 5 years of frozen budgets. "Honestly, more funds are needed to turn around years of damage caused by frozen budgets. However, we are pleased at the down payment Congress is making to support civil rights enforcement."

The Council conducted a survey of EEOC employees during the month of January, which demonstrates the sad state of the cash-strapped agency. One of the most significant survey findings is that 92% of survey respondents believe that the number of frontline employees in EEOC's offices is either inadequate or so low it is a crisis. Another striking survey result, for the agency that prides itself on being the model employer, is that only 9% of employees rated office morale at the highest end of the scale. These concerns are also corroborated by the Office of Personal Management Federal workforce survey, where EEOC employees ranked the agency close to the bottom on the *leadership/knowledge management* and *job-satisfaction* indexes. Martin states, "If EEOC employees are demoralized and impeded in their work by the lack of resources, it is the public who suffers. It is critical that the EEOC increases its staff ceiling to 3,000 employees, which is the same level it was in 1994, the last time discrimination charges were close to last year's record high."

Like the rest of the country, this is a time for change at the EEOC. Without additional front-line hires, the agency's backlogs will further increase as it now takes on enforcement of two new pieces of legislation, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA). The Council supports an increase of EEOC's FY10 budget to \$378 million, the amount originally called for by the Senate for FY08. According to Martin, "This increase in funding is needed now more than ever to support backlog reduction and the enforcement of the new GINA and ADAAA laws."

An Executive Summary and the full survey results can be found at www.council216.org.

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