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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EEOC EMPLOYEES' UNION LAUDS \$18M BUDGET INCREASE FOR EEOC
TO CRACK DOWN ON WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

This morning, the White House Budget was released, which includes an \$18M increase for the small and chronically under-funded Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). According to Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO (the Council), "This is great news for America's workers, that EEOC will have more resources to effectively enforce the laws that ensure an equal playing field on the job."

In recent years, level funding and hiring freezes have taken their toll on EEOC. Since 2000, EEOC has lost 25% of its staff, mostly to frontline positions like investigators, mediators, attorneys and administrative judges. Martin observes, "Rock bottom staffing and two years of record high filings of discrimination charges caused a train-wreck, with American workers the casualties." Martin points to the exploding backlog of unattended to cases anticipated to reach 100,000 by the end of FY10. Average case processing is a dismal 269 days, i.e., 9 months.

Martin states, "The Council is pleased that the White House Budget addresses the rising backlogs and processing times at EEOC by increasing its funding. The Council will continue its work to ensure adequate funding for EEOC, because in addition to staffing issues, EEOC now enforces several new laws."

Martin is gratified that the Council's longtime efforts to increase EEOC's budget have taken hold. "EEOC finally admitted that doing more with less has hurt operations. Congress recognized the crisis with the FY10 Conference Report's recommendation 'to increase EEOC staffing to the levels necessary to achieve backlog reduction.' Now, in the budget released today, the President has shown his support for revitalizing EEOC."

While Martin lauds the increase, which is approximately the amount the Union has been advocating for since 2008, she warns, "This additional funding must be directed to ensure that timely and adequate service to the public is the first priority. It is imperative that EEOC use the increase to hire and train an adequate number of frontline staff, who directly serve the public. By reducing the backlog and implementing the Union's plan for a full service intake model, the agency can cut wait times and offer real-time substantive assistance."

Martin says Federal employee programs must focus on the frontline, "This does not mean using Federal sector pilots to reduce the number of front-line hearing judges, or expanding means to dismiss cases and to prevent discovery and hearings, as could happen under agency pilots."

Martin acknowledges, "We know this is a tough budget year, but preserving EEOC's increase in the final budget absolutely supports the President's bipartisan message that 'jobs must be our No. 1 focus in 2010.' By cracking down on workplace discrimination, EEOC increases opportunities for workers to get jobs and to keep those jobs."

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