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PRESS RELEASE

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EEOC's Union: 45th Anniversary Hoopla Glosses Over Today's Unaddressed Challenges

“EEOC is kicking off a 45th anniversary celebration of the agency at a time when too many discrimination claims are buried in the backlog or dumped to help EEOC’s year end stats,” says Council President Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, (“the Council”), which represents the agency’s workers. Martin says, “The focus needs to be on the sharp contrast between this anniversary hoopla and the real challenges.”

The Union issued a [“top ten challenges for the new Chair,”](#) shortly before EEOC’s new Chair, Jacqueline Berrien was sworn in April 7, 2010. According to Martin, “Despite the fact that these are longstanding issues at EEOC and the Chair has been in office for over 100 days, you would be hard pressed to point to any changes in these critical areas.”

For instance, the Union has offered a plan to improve the agency’s bottlenecked intake process by creating dedicated units staffed with paraprofessionals to expedite this front-end work and provide some relief for the backlogs. However, Martin states, “Almost one year later, the plan is still under review, despite the need to implement it in time for the start of the new fiscal year on October 1.”

EEOC’s 2011 budget request confirms that that the small civil rights agency faces an influx of over 100,000 newly filed discrimination charges and an equal or greater backlog. A multi-year hiring freeze resulted in the loss of over 25% of the EEOC employees, mostly frontline staff. Despite recent hiring, net staffing increases have barely budged. Congress has also charged the EEOC with enforcing three new laws. Martin says, “Too much work and not enough staff means that the public continues to wait 9 or more months for help.”

Martin reserves her greatest frustration over the EEOC’s failure to responsibly reduce its enormous backlog, “The backlog not only delays help to workers facing discrimination, but it can affect the quality of service. Unfortunately, we’re seeing the same old management pressure on EEOC employees to dump cases off the books before the end of the fiscal year.”

Martin is also disgusted by the EEOC’s continuing failure to do right by its own employees. Over a year ago, a Federal Arbitrator ruled that [EEOC willfully violated overtime laws](#) with its own employees. Martin states, “The Union is encouraged by productive discussions with Chair Berrien. However, to date our employees are still awaiting compensation for overtime worked.”

Martin is also concerned about losing talent to other agencies, which offer more training, career growth, and higher pay grades. “It’s ironic to see such a brain drain and low employee morale at the ‘model employer.’”

Martin suggests, “This anniversary could be used to mark the beginning of the end of the EEOC’s backlog, by creating a dedicated intake unit and staffing up to the authorized ceiling. Until the backlog is cleared, EEOC cannot possibly realize the fulfillment of its mission of ending employment discrimination.”