

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2011

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EEOC EMPLOYEES' UNION WILL TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS 3/11/11

Gabrielle Martin, the President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, will testify on March 11, 2011, in Room H-309 of the U.S. Capitol, before the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations. At this open witness hearing Martin will express support for the FY12 budget request for \$385M for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) EEOC, which is the same as the FY11 request. FY10 funding was \$367M. The Council represents the investigators, attorneys, administrative judges, mediators, and support staff in EEOC's offices.

Martin states, "It is critical that EEOC have adequate resources to uphold the laws it enforces. Jobs are a national priority and workplace discrimination costs jobs." In fact, EEOC has seen discrimination filings rise to record highs in the past three years, including 99,992 charges in FY10. EEOC added three new laws to its enforcement authority in 2009, including the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, which were both passed with wide bipartisan support. The tough economy is another factor in the rising charge levels.

EEOC continues to suffer the impact of six years of level funding, during which time the small civil rights agency lost over 25% of its workforce. EEOC ended FY10 with a backlog of 86,338 cases and a dismal 10 month average case processing time. Recent limited frontline hiring at least kept the backlog increase to a minimum. However, the EEOC's FY12 budget justification shows that even with full funding, the backlog will exceed 100,000 cases. Martin observes, "The rise in retaliation charges is an indication that delays at the EEOC are harming those very people who have sought help with the agency by filing charges. Getting assistance from EEOC will be even harder if the budget request is not adopted or funds are cut."

The Council is also plugging budget savings strategies to improve agency efficiency. First, the Council continues to pursue its cost-saving intake plan, which it provided to EEOC leadership last year; agency commitment on implementation is not forthcoming. According to Martin, "The Council's intake plan will uncork the bottle-neck at the front-end of the charge receipt process by putting trained dedicated paraprofessional staff in each EEOC field office. This will free up investigators to work on cases already in the system and reduce the backlog." Second, the Council calls on EEOC to keep its promise from a 2006 field restructuring to reduce supervisor to employee ratio to 1:10. Martin, "Flattening the agency will allow for more frontline staff."

Finally, the Council will ask that Congress require EEOC to finally pay its debt to employees for willfully violating overtime laws since 2006, pursuant to a Federal arbitrator's final decision dated March 23, 2009. Says Martin, "It is shameful that EEOC has not yet done the right thing."

Martin is optimistic that Congress will provide the needed funds and agency oversight, "Civil rights is a bipartisan issue. Funding EEOC helps keep American workers on the job."

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