

Daily Labor Report 4/8/13
Federal Employees
Union Representing EEOC Employees to Seek
Budget Savings That Could Reduce Furloughs



By [Louis C. LaBrecque](#)

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents employees at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, has begun an initiative designed to reduce the number of unpaid furlough days for EEOC employees by finding alternative savings, the union announced April 8.

According to AFGE's National Council of EEOC Locals, also known as AFGE Council 216, EEOC has notified employees that the budget shortfall caused by sequestration will be made up by 8.5 days of unpaid furloughs.

"We cannot sit by and allow wasteful practices while EEOC employees are sent home without pay and the public loses services," Gabrielle Martin, the council's president, said in the statement from AFGE.

Martin told BNA April 8 that EEOC sent furlough notices to employees March 22.

According to Martin, the furloughs are scheduled to take place in two phases. During the first phase, from April 22 to June 28, EEOC is calling for 40 hours of unpaid furloughs, the equivalent of five eight-hour workdays for each employee, she said.

Following the first phase, Martin said, EEOC will look at its cost savings for the fiscal year and determine whether additional furlough days are necessary. If so, she said, employees would be required to take another 28 hours of unpaid furloughs, the equivalent of three-and-a-half additional eight-hour workdays, between July 12 and Sept. 6.

Website for Money-Saving Ideas

According to the statement from AFGE, Council 216 among other things has added a BOLO (Be On the Lookout) section to its members-only Facebook page. This will allow employees to report wasteful spending they observe in their offices, the union said.

Martin told BNA that the impetus for the BOLO section was to capture ideas and information from EEOC employees regarding agency waste that should not be occurring in the face of the furloughs. For example, she said, employees have reported instances where EEOC managers are traveling across the country to review case files instead of using video teleconferencing.

Employees also are being encouraged to use the Council 216 BOLO section to share cost-saving ideas, Martin added.

"We have already received an idea for the agency to require all printers to be set for double-sided printing. This would instantly cut the agency's paper and ink-toner expenses in half," she said.

According to the statement from AFGE, other budget-saving strategies being suggested for the

agency include lowering supervisor-to-employee ratios and expanding voluntary telework to reduce EEOC's office rental costs.

Contract and Conference Expenditures Targeted

Contracting out at EEOC remains a "sore point" for the union, Martin said in the statement.

"Morale, already low, declines further because EEOC's permanent workforce is being sent home for 8.5 days while contractors continue to work," she said.

Among other things, employees have reported seeing EEOC solicitations on FedBizOpps for a legislative tracking service, Martin said.

She said she also has heard from members that contract mediators are still working, often in the same cities where the agency's own mediators face furloughs. "These contracts should be cut or modified given the current budget landscape," Martin said.

Martin added that an EEOC leadership conference, scheduled to be held in May at a location in the Chesapeake Bay, had been "quietly postponed" after employees saw it posted on the agency's website.

"Cancellation should occur to save agency resources wherever possible," she said.

"As for the August EXCEL conference in Denver, flying in managers for glad-handing is a totally unacceptable expenditure in the face of furlough days," Martin said, referring to EEOC's annual training conference, which is scheduled to be held this year from Aug. 26-29.

"We are on the lookout for any idea big or small to save money. The union will not stop its campaign until the EEOC cuts back on the 8.5 furlough days by finding savings in places other than the backs of its employees," Martin said.

Agency Points to MOU on Sequester

Claudia A. Withers, EEOC's chief operating officer, said in a statement provided to BNA April 8 that the agency had worked closely with AFGE to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on implementation of the sequester, with the goal of minimizing the adverse effects of the furloughs to the greatest possible extent.

"In the interim, as we have told all EEOC employees, and as the MOU itself states, we will continue to look for cost savings in an effort to further reduce the number of furlough hours needed," she said.

"We understand this is a stressful time and we are doing everything possible to mitigate the effects of sequestration and minimize furloughs," Withers added.