

EEOC Avoids Second Round of Furloughs

By Amelia Gruber

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Employees at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will not face a second round of furlough days this fiscal year, the agency announced on Thursday.

EEOC has already required workers to take five days of unpaid leave due to budget cuts under sequestration; its chief financial officer concluded an additional three days would not be necessary, Chairwoman Jacqueline Berrien said in a July 11 all-staff memorandum.

“Although Phase II is canceled, sequestration remains a challenge,” the memo stated. “We will continue to prioritize our spending and examine all planned expenditures, making reductions where we can to realize future savings.”

The union representing EEOC workers applauded the agency’s decision to cancel the second round of furloughs, but also expressed concern over future budget cuts.

“The tough times are not over,” said Gabrielle Martin, president of the American Federation of Government Employees’ National Council of EEOC Locals No. 216, in a statement. “Unless Congress undoes sequestration, it is here to stay for 10 years.”

House appropriators’ draft of the fiscal 2014 Commerce-Justice-Science spending bill, released earlier this week, includes \$355 million for the EEOC. That represents a decrease of \$15 million from the agency’s fiscal 2013 base funding level, the union noted.

EEOC’s backlog of discrimination cases could jump from about 70,000 pre-furloughs to more than 98,000, AFGE said. The union has been engaged in a campaign to mitigate sequestration’s potential damage to employees’ livelihoods and to the agency’s mission of preventing workplace discrimination.

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