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PRESS RELEASE

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FRIDAY IS DECISION DAY FOR EEOC FOR SECOND ROUND OF FURLOUGHS

Friday marks the end of the reassessment period for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), as the agency decides whether to go forward with a second round of unpaid furlough days. EEOC has already required employees to take five unpaid furlough days to absorb sequestration budget cuts. The Union that represents employees at the EEOC is urging the civil rights agency to announce an immediate end to furloughs and to let employees work.

According to Gabrielle Martin the President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, "It is time to end the insanity of furloughs. Furloughs harm the public, harm EEOC employees and their families, and harm the communities in which they reside." Martin warns, "EEOC's backlog was over 70,000 cases before this year's employee furloughs. EEOC is projecting the backlog will skyrocket to over 98,000 with sequestration cuts; never mind the hiring freeze and loss of staff."

The Union has mounted a multipronged campaign to stop EEOC furloughs. EEOC employees have taken part in a letter writing campaign to EEOC Chair Berrien to share their personal stories of the harmful effects of furloughs on their work and finances. Friends are tweeting the agency, and supporters are changing their facebook profile photos to a picture of a stop sign that says, "Stop EEOC furloughs." The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is supporting the effort with action e-mails to Congress.

In a June 24, 2013 letter to Chair Berrien, Martin cited to cost-savings measures that should be employed instead of furloughs, e.g., reducing "wasteful management travel," "reducing district budgets 5% commiserate with the sequestration reduction," "discontinuing the service contracts that allow contract support staff, paralegals and mediators to work and get paid for work EEOC employees perform" and canceling EEOC's August EXCEL and FEPA conferences

Martin says, "Unfortunately, the EEOC appears determined to stick with furloughs as their first, last, and best cost-cutting solution. The agency rejects every cost saving measure the Union offers."

Martin is also critical that EEOC is needlessly dragging out the furlough decision, "The EEOC is compounding the fiasco of furloughs with the uncertainty of more furloughs. Employees need to be able to plan their finances. The EEOC's dithering stops employees from planning family vacations, choosing colleges and making many other household decisions. EEOC needs to announce once and for all that furlough are off the table. Any further delay is unacceptable."

Martin cautions, "Unless Congress undoes sequestration, it is here to stay for ten years. We saw that yesterday, when the House CJS Appropriations draft bill locked in sequestration cuts by recommending to reduce EEOC's FY14 budget \$15M below FY13 base funding level. EEOC must find a better way to manage current and future cuts than furloughing its entire workforce."