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March 19, 2007

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan  
Room H-310 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
2442 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Information for EEOC Appropriations Hearing

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

The undersigned members of the National Council of EEOC Locals No. 216 represent employees, who every day at work must deal with members of the public. We write to provide you with additional information concerning our negative experiences with EEOC's contract call center pilot, in advance of the budget hearing on March 20, 2007.

Our membership includes the investigators and other frontline staff, who work in offices that are severely understaffed. The investigators deal with the constituents of members of Congress. The investigators struggle to investigate pending charges of discrimination, because they are overwhelmed with work sent from the call center, which can only take a message and forward the paper to EEOC offices. The investigators must talk to members of the public who already have talked to the call center, have waited several weeks to hear back from EEOC and who are frustrated and angry that no one seems to care about them or their issues.

We recently learned that on the eve of this Subcommittee's oversight hearing, a group of EEOC Directors was solicited by Headquarters to sign onto a letter to EEOC Chair Naomi Earp supporting the continuation of the poor performing call center pilot. The letter stands in stark contrast to the Director's previous critical comments included in an evaluation of the call center conducted by EEOC's Inspector General, dated June 29, 2006. (Attachment A).

While it appears that Chair Earp is also currently advocating making the contract call center a permanent EEOC expenditure, we must highlight that this is inconsistent with her previous position. In July of 2006, as then Vice-Chair, she voted against renewing the contract on the call center: To justify her vote she made the following comments that remain true today:

*"[T]his is not the right time to move forward with another expenditure of our limited funds. Our agency is facing increasing pressures. Our budget is growing slower than our increasing costs. We have yet to properly harness technology to help us leverage our limited precious resources."*

*"But just as it is a mistake to constantly study an issue and never act, I believe it is equally as bad to continue doing something that is not working as expected, hoping to fix it on the fly, such*

*as developing a business case as we are trying to service the public. A business case, after the fact, is unacceptable.”*

While EEOC staff has declined 23 percent since 2001, the Inspector General found that the call center saves the time of only 6.71 employees. Spread over 53 field offices and Headquarters, this meager assistance is not even noticeable to investigators and staff who work with the public. Given EEOC’s admissions about its rising backlogs, its lack of staffing and increasing time it takes to investigate cases, EEOC does not need a contract call center that frustrates the public and performs so poorly. The millions of dollars expended on the call center could be used far more effectively to address EEOC’s frontline staffing crisis and fund other needed resources.

If you have any questions, need additional information or need to clarify anything, please contact National President, Gabrielle Martin at 303.725.9079, or the National Council Legislative Coordinator, Rachel Shonfield at 305.496.7939. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Gabrielle Martin, President  
President AFGE Local 3230

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Davidson, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
President AFGE Local 3504

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Rachel Shonfield, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Delegate AFGE Local 3599

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Levi Morrow, Treasurer  
President AFGE Local 3637

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Danny Lawson, Secretary  
AFGE Local 3637

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Pat Floyd  
President AFGE Local 2667

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Powell  
Delegate AFGE Local 2667

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
David Skillman  
Delegate AFGE Local 3220

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephanie Perkins  
Delegate AFGE Local 3504

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Ricardo Cuevas  
President AFGE Local 3555

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon Baker  
President AFGE Local 3599

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Rhonda Ellison  
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\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Regina Andrew  
President AFGE Local 3614

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Wilson  
President AFGE Local 3637

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Edwards  
Delegate AFGE Local 3637

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*Kelle M. ...*

*[Handwritten signature]*

*[Handwritten signature]*

*Pamela J. Edwards*  
Pamela J. Edwards, Delegate #3637

## ATTACHMENT "A"

### EEOC'S DISTRICT DIRECTORS DO NOT UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORT EEOC'S CONTRACT CALL CENTER

On the eve of a Congressional oversight hearing, EEOC's District Directors signed onto a letter to EEOC Chair Naomi claiming to support the continuation of the agency's call center. Despite this apparent bow to pressure by their superiors in Headquarters, the Directors are actually on record with some very pointed criticism regarding the contract call center's poor quality of service and its failure to alleviate the volume of work placed on field offices.

#### Excerpts Demonstrating Director's Criticism of the Call Center From the Office of Inspector General's Report dated June 29, 2006, "The EEOC's National Contact Center: An Evaluation of its Impacts":

One office **director** and survey respondents indicated that they believe that the NCC adds another layer of bureaucracy for customers.

In addition, respondents to the **director** survey wrote that the CSRs need more training on the application and interpretation of laws enforced by the EEOC.

One respondent to the **director** survey wrote:

"The NCC has actually increased the work for [this] office by taking duplicate calls, capturing and forwarding incorrect information about the individual's contact information and providing incorrect information to callers." A few respondents to the director survey indicated they have not experienced a drop in call volume. As suggested by some employees in focus groups, one reason may be that the NCC is picking up calls that have been previously dropped or lost due to telephone technology, thus increasing the workload.

Survey respondents commented in February that NCC forms often have errors.

Investigators from one office agreed that EASQs are "threadbare" (inaccurate and/or incomplete) 85 percent to 95 percent of the time. One Office **Director** wrote:

"More often than not, there are major errors in the information that has been provided by the NCC. Just two examples: 1) Shondra Weager is really Sondra Yeager. 2) PCP's Religion is Musselman. There are so many more examples. Addresses, telephone #s, and general information are often incorrect. We spend numerous hours receiving, responding, correcting and then re-entering information from EAS to IMS."

The NCC also creates duplicate work when it does not sufficiently crosscheck the IMS, which occurs for the EASQs as well as the GroupWise emails. One **director** explained that often the "Notes" section in the IMS may already contain information stating that the office has left a message for the PCP when the office receives a GroupWise email that no one has returned the PCP's calls. As one respondent to the director survey wrote:

“It seems like a duplication of effort when we have made contact with a PCP [to] then get information from the NCC that we need to call the person (who has already been called).”

Two respondents to the **director** survey indicated no ability to redirect resources, which they attributed to an increased number of inquiries since launching the NCC. Five respondents reported that the NCC has increased their workload, particularly at the supervisory level, largely because supervisors review and track the NCC forms to ensure that staff handle them appropriately, which causes them to get behind in other duties. All remaining offices reported no ability to redirect resources. Reasons cited included increased paper and follow-up work related to EASQ and GroupWise emails, and attrition over the past few years (people are still behind in their duties).

One Office **Directors** reported that the NCC reports they currently receive are not much help and that they need data relevant to their region. They also indicated concern about any trends due to inaccuracies in forms they receive from the NCC.

In addition, by not fully disclosing their role in the intake process, the NCC may be creating confusion about the difference between the NCC and EEOC. For example, one comment in the responses to our office **director** survey explained that a CP would often call the Investigator, leave a voice mail message, and then dial the NCC. In a similar vein, 42 percent of survey respondents indicated that many PCPs they talked with had the impression that they filed a charge with the NCC. One office is trying to eliminate this confusion by requesting that staff discuss the NCC’s role during charge counseling to assure the CP that the NCC is part of the EEOC.

Following is a written comment from one EEOC Office **Director**:

“The emails come through auto-assigned to wording that says the office failed to do something. The standard language is ‘fail to respond.’ This creates misunderstanding and is frustrating for the offices because usually they are in the process of trying to reach the person and for one reason or another have not yet connected. First, the NCC should cross-reference with the IMS to see what is happening on the case. The language in the form and process should be revisited.”