

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EEOC LOCALS No 216, AFGE, AFL-CIO
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Commissioner Christine M. Griffin
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1801 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20507

Dear Commissioner Griffin:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the National Council to express our profound disappointment with your vote at the July 13, 2006 Commission meeting to extend the National Call Center contract. Yours was the deciding vote to allow the continuation of the outsourced call center, which by all accounts is not operating effectively.

As you know, EEOC is not flush with money, so it does not have the luxury of pumping millions of dollars each year away from critical in-house needs to a failing experimental project. Because you were the last Commissioner to vote in the roll call, you were well aware that your vote had the power to end the pilot. Unfortunately, instead you voted in support of the call center, along with Chair Cari Dominguez and Commissioner Leslie Silverman.

The call center vote was the first controversial vote of substance that you have participated in as Commissioner. Commissioner Stuart Ishimaru opposed the extension, as did Vice Chair Naomi Earp, who has changed her position and now opposes the continuation of the call center because of its disappointing performance and expense. We are aware that you were not appointed when the call center pilot first was approved -- perhaps having only recently joined the Commission, the best course would have been for you to abstain on this vote.

When you met with the Council in March, you explained that your actions as Commissioner would be guided by the goal of improving the quality of life of the people the Commission serves. Yet, in this matter, your vote ran contrary to your expressed philosophy, and to the evidence before the Commission.

Prior to your vote, you were presented with evidence from EEOC's Inspector General's report, the National Council's year long survey of the call center, and examples of error-ridden "EAS" questionnaires generated by call center telemarketers. All of this evidence demonstrates that the call center pilot has been a costly failure and waste of resources. The call center certainly has not improved the quality of life of the people that it serves.

Your vote in support of outsourcing EEOC's calls away from agency offices to 36 telemarketers with 7 days of training also runs counter to the will of many lawmakers and civil rights groups, who have spoken out on this issue. Twenty-nine U.S. Senators, led by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), signed onto a

July 2, 2004 letter opposing the call center. This group of Senators expressed concern that “[h]andling sensitive calls and providing advice to the public about potential violation of our nation’s laws protecting against employment discrimination is precisely the sort of inherently governmental function unsuitable for contracting out.” On March 13, 2006, one-hundred and thirteen members of the House of Representatives, led by Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) and Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI), supported a bipartisan amendment to eliminate funding for the call center. Senate Appropriators included a similar suggestion in their conference report. Civil rights organizations including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, AARP, National Employment Lawyers Association, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, National Organization of Women, 9 to 5 National Association of Working Women, and the Southern Poverty Law Center have all written to the EEOC to express concern about the call center.

The Council is deeply troubled by your vote in support of the call center. This key vote to outsource public service to a poorly performing contractor, at a cost of several million dollars, cannot be ameliorated by your good efforts in other areas.

If the EEOC is permitted by Congress to extend funding for the call center, and you are presented with the opportunity to vote on this issue again next year, the Council urges you to reconsider your position and allow your vote to reflect the evidence – as well as the strongly held views of lawmakers, the civil rights community, and employees – that no further resources should be wasted on this pilot. The Council also hopes that you will be attentive to the concerns of these constituencies in future votes on other matters.

We look forward to a continued dialogue and will be looking at your future votes to ensure that they truly do improve the quality of life for the public we serve.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Martin
National President
National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO

cc: Senator Harry Reid, Democratic Leader
Senator Edward Kennedy, Ranking Member of the HELP Committee
Senator Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member
SCJS Appropriations Subcommittee
Andrea E. Brooks, AFGE National Vice President, Women’s and Fair Practices
Beth Moten, AFGE Legislative and Political Director