

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EEOC LOCALS No 216, AFGE, AFL-CIO
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PRESS RELEASE

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EEOC 'S REORGANIZATION SPELLS NEW YEAR'S DOOM

As employees at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report to work on January 3, 2006, the New Year will be hollow, not happy. This is because, on December 22, Chair Cari Dominguez, already away on vacation, sent her "drive by" e-mail message of doom to staff: the EEOC would implement its controversial downsizing plan, effective New Year's Day, despite never receiving Congressional approval to go forward. The plan results in the loss of resources to at least 12 offices, which have been downgraded, had their budgets pulled and their staffing capped or reduced.

The National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, the Union that represents EEOC employees, denounces the Chair's decision to prematurely implement its flawed reorganization, rather than work with Congress to improve the plan. "As a result of the reorganization, already understaffed District offices get more work, while downsized offices, with even fewer resources, still must address growing claims of discrimination," says Gabrielle Martin, President of the employees' Union. "Like horrified bystanders at the scene of a crime, we are watching and waiting."

Given the history of discrimination in this county, one must wonder why the EEOC was so intent on sending a strong message that it is not interested in investigating or litigating claims of discrimination. According to Martin, "EEOC's 'new look' resembles a geographic system that failed us in the past." Litigation Centers covering multiple states were given up in the 1970's in favor of disbursing legal units throughout the states. "Now with one third of EEOC's offices losing litigation authority we are back to the old days," says Martin. The Commission's backlog of cases is climbing, the length of time it takes to investigate cases is climbing, and the Commission continues to close cases irresponsibly in an effort to stay afloat. Moreover, in the past year, benefits EEOC obtained for victims of discrimination have decreased.

Funding for EEOC, when taking into account inflation, has decreased. "However, the EEOC has missed a real opportunity to reorganize by redeploying staff and resources to the frontlines. Instead, the agency is adding managers and squandering funds on a multimillion dollar outsourced call center," says Martin. "The only thing we know for certain is that the plan does not provide us the staffing we need to effectively serve the public." As to the details of the implementation, Martin says, "Chair Dominguez's 'drive by' message did not provide information on what would happen next. Employees, like the public, were told to wait and see." Given EEOC's efforts to slip the dirty details of this reorganization plan past Congress, the public and its own employees, only

vigilance and outside influence will ensure that the civil rights agency does not self destruct.