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PRESS RELEASE

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UNION SUCCESSFULLY CAMPAIGNS TO STOP EEOC FURLOUGHS

According to Gabrielle Martin the President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, "The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) sent an all-staff e-mail this afternoon confirming that there will not be a second round of furloughs." EEOC has already required employees to take five unpaid furlough days to absorb sequestration budget cuts. The agency just concluded a two week reassessment period to determine whether employees would be sent home unpaid for three additional days.

Martin states, "We applaud the EEOC for making the right decision. Furloughs harm the public, harm EEOC employees and their families, and harm the communities in which they reside. I also want to thank EEOC's employees, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), and the agency's supporters for their efforts in persuading EEOC that wringing savings out of frontline employees is counterproductive to carrying out our civil rights mission."

"We accomplished this goal of ending EEOC furloughs in solidarity," says Martin. The Union mounted a multipronged campaign. EEOC employees wrote letters to EEOC Chair Berrien to share their personal stories of the harmful effects of furloughs on their work and finances. Friends tweeted the agency, and supporters changed their Facebook profile photos to a picture of a stop sign that says, "Stop EEOC furloughs." AFGE sent action e-mails to Congress.

Martin warns, "Tough times are not over. 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's backlog was over 70,000 cases before this year's employee furloughs and staffing losses. With sequestration, EEOC projects the backlog will jump to over 98,000."

"The Union will have two goals as we move forward: (1) end sequestration and (2) prevent future furloughs." Martin explains, "We will work to help Congress and the public understand that sequestration is harmful. Taking a meat axe to the Federal budget causes inefficient results. EEOC is a perfect example. This is a time when job creation should be a priority. EEOC is charged with stopping and preventing workplace discrimination – a job killer. Indiscriminately taking resources from EEOC prevents us from doing our job of keeping Americans on the jobs Congress works so hard to ensure are created and growing."

Whether it is sequestration or other budget tightening measures in these difficult times, Martin cautions, "EEOC must find a better way to manage current and future cuts than furloughing its entire workforce. EEOC must work smarter. The Union supports employing video-teleconferences to end wasteful management travel, discontinuing the service contracts for work EEOC employees can perform, implementing the Union's dedicated intake plan, and reducing space through expanded voluntary telework. Sequestration or not, we do not want to see EEOC furloughs in FY14."