

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2005

The Honorable Cari M. Dominguez
Chair
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1801 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20507

Dear Chair Dominguez:

On behalf of thousands of American workers who depend on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is charged with helping women and men fight back against discrimination in the workplace, we urge you to reconsider your restructuring proposal which would downgrade several EEOC offices around the country, including California, Colorado, Ohio, Texas, Washington, Louisiana, Maryland, Wisconsin, Michigan and Virginia. The plan also takes away jurisdiction from some states. For instance, EEOC's Florida offices will lose jurisdiction for the Florida panhandle. The cost savings that EEOC claims this plan will bring apparently comes at the expense of starving EEOC's downgraded and smaller offices of much needed staff and resources. Implementation of the EEOC workforce repositioning effort will undercut critical workplace protections and services provided to working women and men and result in resources being diverted from loyal federal employees to a privatized national call center, which is already providing inferior services to victims of employment discrimination.

We are especially concerned that you have called a meeting of the Commission with extremely short notice to vote on the restructuring plan on Monday, May 16, 2005. And although the restructuring proposal will affect the agency for years to come, and affect EEOC staff throughout the country, you have offered no opportunity for the public to offer comment on this controversial plan.

In Fiscal Year 2004, 24,249 complaints, which amounts to 30% of EEOC's total filings, alleged discrimination based on sex. The only charges of discrimination filed more often than sex are race charges. With EEOC's backlog climbing to over 51,000 by 2006, it can be concluded that women, who are subjected to discrimination based on their sex, will have to wait even longer for justice. The wait is further compounded by the fact that our constituents will now be forced to contact a customer service representative at the National Call Center for information on the EEOC process.

We are very concerned that, despite reliable experienced federal EEOC employees that include mediators, investigators and attorneys, women and men who feel they have been

discriminated against will now be made to rely on the "expertise" of contract employees who have received only one week of training and read from scripts. Unfortunately, mere scripts cannot address complex questions posed by troubled women and men who seek guidance on employment rights to stop discrimination against them.

According to a 2002 study by Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality, federal call centers provide better customer service than centers run by state and local agencies or private firms. However, contracting out call centers, particularly call centers established to respond to complicated inquiries about legal rights and protections, can result in inferior service and increased costs. Downgrading EEOC offices and contracting out work to the lowest bidder in lieu of providing professional one-on-one local counseling will not serve as a deterrent for discrimination against America's workers.

We must safeguard civil rights by ensuring that all working women and men have access to adequately staffed EEOC offices located in their own communities. The shortage of staffing coupled with the ill conceived call center pilot prevent the agency from effectively investigating all cases, particularly those of wage and sex-based discrimination.

As our nation's premier institution for enforcing antidiscrimination laws, we are urging the EEOC to reconsider its repositioning effort and make fighting discrimination against women and men in the workplace a priority.

Sincerely,

Lois Capps

Nancy Pelosi

Stephen Polites

Hilda L. Solis

Rosa L. Swani

Jan Schakel

Frank J. Sander

Barbara Lee

Tammy Baldoni

Dino DeGletta

Sam Johnson

Al Rossi

Lynn C. Woolsey

Marcy Kipton

Dois O. Matzui

Nita Loney

Carolyn B. Maloy

Louella Sanchez

Ann A. Davis

Julie Carson

Grace J. Napolitano

Diane E. Watson

Carolyn McCortney

Stephanie Huseph

Medeline J. Rudello

Thi Phan

Bethy McCollum

Ellen Fauscher

ma shoo

Joe Joffe

Signatories to 5/13/05 Letter:

Lois Capps, Nancy Pelosi, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Hilda Solis, Rosa DeLauro, Jan Schakowsky, Linda Sanchez, Barbara Lee, Tammy Baldwin, Diana DeGette, Gwen Moore, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Lynn Woolsey, Marcy Kaptur, Doris Matsui, Nita Lowey, Carolyn Maloney, Loretta Sanchez, Susan Davis, Julia Carson, Grace Napolitano, Diane Watson, Carolyn McCarthy, Stephanie Herseth, Madeleine Bordallo, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Betty McCollum, Ellen Tauscher, Anna Eshoo, Zoe Lofgren

cc: Vice Chair Naomi Earp
Commissioner Leslie Silverman
Commissioner Stuart Ishimaru