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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**EEOC POISED TO VOTE FOR GIANT STEP BACKWARDS
FOR THE FUTURE OF CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT**

On July 8, 2005, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is scheduled to vote on its nationwide restructuring plan, which downgrades offices and reduces agency staffing. While EEOC has attempted to whitewash the restructuring as an innocuous redeployment of management to the frontlines, an internal memorandum and financial data, released on agency's website on the eve of the hearing, demonstrate that significant funds will be invested in senior management positions. According to Gabrielle Martin, President of the National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, AFGE/AFL-CIO, "EEOC's restructuring will result in a more top heavy organization, with more layers and less resources to serve the public. The agency claims their half-baked plan will save \$4.8 million over eight years. However, instead of downsizing offices, the EEOC could save at least \$5 million now, by just pulling the plug on its privatized call center."

EEOC's inconsistencies regarding its restructuring plans and proposed savings, include:

EEOC Assertion: The plan reduces the number of managers and administrators and increases front-line staff. Source: EEOC Website.

Fact: Pursuant to its restructuring plan, EEOC intends to fill: 5 Senior Executive Service (SES) positions in the field; 2 SES positions in the office of General Counsel; 5 Field Office Director slots; 15 Office Managers and 9 Admin technicians. Source: EEOC Website and Draft Repositioning Implementation Proposal, June 14-15, 2005.

EEOC Assertion: EEOC anticipates a "downward trend in inventory." Source: *EEOC Repositioning-Field Offices Questions and Answers*.

Fact: EEOC anticipates its back log (inventory) will rise from 29,966 in FY '04 to 37,332 in FY '05, to a whopping 51,572 in FY '06. Source: EEOC's FY '06 Budget Request.

EEOC Assertion: The criteria for downgrading offices came from a workgroup sponsored by Vice Chair Naomi Earp and then-Commissioner Paul Miller. Source: EEOC Website.

Fact: According to the cited report, "The representatives from the field on the Repositioning Workgroup (Workgroup) do not believe that a business case been made for reducing offices, and, therefore do not recommend that the current number of district offices be reduced." Source: 2004 Repositioning Workgroup Report.

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EEOC Assertion: EEOC plans to open two new offices. Source: EEOC Website

Fact: For the foreseeable future one person will act as “virtual office contact” for new offices. Source: Draft Repositioning Implementation Proposal, June 14-15, 2005.

“EEOC’s duplicitous assertions regarding its restructuring plans leave one nauseous about the future of civil rights enforcement in this country,” says Martin. “The supposed guardians of civil rights, who vote for this plan, will leave the EEOC ill prepared to fight the rising claims of discrimination. As a result, America’s workers will be left without basic protections against discrimination in the workplace.”

After EEOC reluctantly submitted to an abbreviated public comment period, the agency turned a deaf-ear to the feedback it received on the plan. At a hastily scheduled June 23, 2005 EEOC forum, civil rights groups, public and private sector unions, fair employment practice agencies, and Congressional aides rebuked the agency for rushing to vote on restructuring and refusing to provide sufficient information or justification for its proposal to downgrade offices and chop off state jurisdictions. Despite these protests, the agency made only cosmetic changes to the plan, consisting of transferring a few counties from one proposed district office to another. Martin says, “This proves that the ‘public comment process’ was a mere mockery. EEOC never intended to listen to the public or address their concerns.”

On July 6, 2005, thirty United States Senators, led by Sen. Edward Kennedy, served a letter on EEOC Chair Cari Dominguez opposing EEOC’s restructuring, because: “We are not satisfied with your generally unsupported assertions that the restructuring will not diminish the extent to which our constituents have ready access to meaningful EEOC services. “ The letter calls on the EEOC to “defer going forward with action on the restructuring proposal until the Government Accountability Office has released the results of its study on the issue.”

The joint Senate letter comes on the heels of the Senate Appropriations Committee Report, which states that the Committee, “remains concerned over the pending Equal Opportunity Employment Commission [EEOC] repositioning plan and its impact on the Commission’s ability to perform its investigations and enforcement duties.”

Martin believes EEOC’s timetable further demonstrates a pattern of arrogance and obfuscation. “First EEOC tried to push through its plans in a week without getting public comment. EEOC is disregarding a bipartisan commissioned GAO study on EEOC restructuring not due until November. EEOC timed its ‘public forum’ for when two major stakeholders were out of town holding their annual conventions. Now EEOC is trying to quietly hold its vote on the Friday of a shortened holiday week, when many people are away, including Congress, which is in district recess.”

Martin questions, “Why is EEOC in such a rush? EEOC needs to spend more time addressing the concerns of John Q Public, such as keeping offices adequately staffed and getting a handle on the agency’s growing backlog of cases.”