

January 27, 2004

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

Dear Chair Dominguez:

As you know, many residents of Maryland's 8th Congressional District are federal employees who have a strong interest in the outcome of any reforms to their civil rights protections. With the recent diminution of collective bargaining rights and appeal rights to the Merit System Protection Board, I am committed to maintaining meaningful civil rights protections for federal employees.

Upon reading the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004-2009, I noticed that you are determined to bring about dramatic changes in the system to process discrimination charges in the federal sector. While this is a laudatory goal, EEOC should consider the views of seasoned EEO practitioners and other stakeholders to prevent careless and costly mistakes.

I was very much impressed with the 7-step proposal that a coalition of civil rights organizations, employee advocates, and plaintiff's law firms submitted to you on March 25, 2003. The coalition members are strong advocates for eliminating discrimination in the federal sector. Their expertise and dedication to civil rights would contribute to the successful design and implementation of any reform proposal.

In particular, the coalition was emphatic in requesting that the investigative function be retained at federal agencies and that EEOC hearings be continued. I found their proposal to be well thought-out, especially their recommendations that would help EEOC attain the goal to balance its desire to provide prompt service, while preserving the ability to devote the necessary time and attention to adjudicate and remedy meritorious and complex claims of discrimination.

I would appreciate a copy, at your earliest convenience, of your response to their proposal.

Sincerely,

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress

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