

U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20507

APR -6, 2004

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Van Hollen:

This is in response to your letter of January 27, 2004, to Chair Cari M. Dominguez regarding the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's) plans to bring improvements to the current system for processing complaints of discrimination brought by federal employees and applicants for employment.

First, please be assured that we at EEOC share your concern over the federal sector complaints process. Chair Dominguez has made an examination of the process a priority for the Commission early on in her administration. In November 2002, the Chair convened a Commission meeting where we took testimony from a cross-section of stakeholders concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the current process. Many who testified at this meeting told us that the federal sector complaints process is much too slow, far too expensive, unnecessarily intricate, and inherently unfair. In addition to the Commission meeting, the Chair has held a series of smaller roundtable discussions with various stakeholder groups, as well as received numerous written comments. Among these was the "7-step proposal" referred to in your letter, which we are carefully considering along with other proposals received.

As the Commission now discusses options for a complaints processing system that will be more efficient, responsive and fair, we are very grateful for having had the opportunity to learn from those who have navigated the process firsthand. The Commission plans to continue to partner with our stakeholders as we develop our thoughts in this area. If the Commission makes the decision to propose significant reform to the process, we will do so through the formal rulemaking process so that we can continue to receive input from all involved.

If we can be of any further assistance in this or any other matter, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Fisher
Acting Director of Communications
and Legislative Affairs