

Daily Labor Report, June 27, 2013
Federal Employees Union Urges EEOC to Stop Implementation
Of Second Round of Unpaid Furlough Days



By [Louis C. LaBrecque](#)

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents employees at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in a June 26 statement urged the civil rights agency to reverse any plans for a second round of furloughs.

EEOC in late March notified its employees that they would be required to take five days of unpaid furloughs between April 22 and June 28 ([67 DLR A-14, 4/8/13](#)). The agency said at the time that, if necessary, employees would be required to take another 28 hours of unpaid furloughs, the equivalent of three-and-a-half additional eight-hour workdays, between July 12 and Sept. 6. Next week, EEOC is scheduled to begin deciding whether to go forward with the second round of furloughs, AFGE said.

"Enough is enough. Furloughs are a silent scourge undermining civil rights enforcement," Gabrielle Martin, president of AFGE's National Council of EEOC Locals, No. 216, said in the union's statement. She predicted that EEOC's case backlog, including approximately 70,000 unresolved private sector charges as of the end of fiscal year 2012, would "skyrocket" if the second round of furloughs takes place as scheduled.

According to the statement from AFGE, a June 24 letter from Martin to Berrien asserted that the additional furlough days will "impact not only the EEOC's employees and their wellbeing, but their families and the wellbeing of the communities in which they live and support businesses and jobs, as well."

Alternative Cost-Cutting Measures Suggested

Martin's letter cited cost-saving measures that she said could be deployed instead of furloughs, such as eliminating "wasteful management travel," reducing district budgets by 5 percent, and discontinuing what she described as unnecessary service contracts, according to the statement from AFGE.

The letter also suggested that EEOC consider canceling its annual EXCEL training conference, which is scheduled to be held this year in Denver from Aug. 26-29, the union said. AFGE said it is calling on EEOC employees, other federal employees and union members, agency stakeholders, and concerned citizens to weigh in with EEOC as it begins assessing a second round of furloughs.

"If you care about civil rights, call, email, or tweet EEOC to stop staff furloughs," Martin said in the union's statement.

She added that if EEOC insists on a second round of furloughs, AFGE will encourage employees to file a second round of appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

"EEOC must find a better way to manage than furloughing its entire workforce," Martin said, noting that unless Congress agrees to undo sequestration—the across-the-board cuts to federal spending put into place by the Budget Control Act, which President Obama signed into law in August 2011 ([148 DLR A-10, 8/2/11](#))—it is here to stay for the next 10 years.

Sequestration for fiscal year 2013 began March 1 after initially being scheduled to start in

January.

EEOC Says It Will Evaluate Needs

Claudia Withers, EEOC's chief operating officer, in a statement provided to BNA June 26 said the agency will evaluate between July 1 and July 12 whether further furloughs will be necessary.

"As agreed upon with the union, between July 1-12, 2013, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer will assess the savings that were incurred during Phase I of the furloughs, as well as the agency's current budget level, in order to determine the necessity of additional furloughs," Withers said.

"Accordingly, we have asked staff not to schedule any further furlough days in July. As we have done throughout this process, we will provide information to the union and to EEOC employees as soon as possible," she added.