

EEOC TO HOLD TOWN-HALL MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS TO ADVANCE HIRING OF WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division announce a full-day Town Hall Listening Session, on Friday, November 20, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the University of New Orleans Training Resource and Assistive-technology Center (UNO-TRAC) 2000 Lakeshore Drive, New Orleans, LA 70148.

This is one of a series of forums for public input being held throughout the country in coming weeks to obtain direct input from the business/employer communities as well as the disability and disability advocacy community on EEOC's proposed regulations under the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA).

Presided over by EEOC's Acting Chair, Stuart J. Ishimaru, Acting Vice Chair, Christine Griffin, and Commissioner Constance S. Barker, as well as DOJ's Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Samuel Bagenstos, Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Mazen Baswari, and Chief of the Disability Rights Section of the Civil Rights Division, John Wodatch, the Town Hall Listening Session is an opportunity for these officials to hear directly from stakeholders of all perspectives on the proposed regulations.

Five-minute time slots to address the panel will be available from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Some of the slots will be available on an advance registration basis and some on first-come, first-served sign up basis at the event. Members of the public are also invited to attend and view the proceedings, with space available on a first-come, first-served basis.

As a reasonable accommodation, there will be limited availability to provide public input by telephone. To request this accommodation you must register in advance.

Individuals representing themselves or organizations are urged to take advantage of this opportunity to provide input on the EEOC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which can be viewed, along with a question-and-answer guide, at www.eeoc.gov.

For more information, or to register as a speaker, please contact Maple Thomas at 504-595-2827 (TTY 504-595-2958) or at Maple.Thomas@eeoc.gov

Sign Language Interpreters, CART, and assistive listening devices will be available. If you need printed materials in an alternative format please email Elisa.gonzalez.ctr@tma.osd.mil Please let her know what you need and the location (city) of the event you will be attending.

Both EEOC and DOJ want to encourage all individuals and organizations who cannot attend this event to make sure you submit comments and attachments electronically at www.regulations.gov, the Federal eRulemaking Portal. The ID # is 3046-AA85. Written comments may also be submitted to Stephen Llewellyn, Executive Secretariat, EEOC, 131 M Street, NE., Suite 4NW08R, Room 6NE03F, Washington, DC 20507. Comments may be transmitted by facsimile ("FAX") machine by dialing (202) 663-4114. (This is not a toll-free number.) Only comments of six or fewer pages will be accepted via FAX transmittal. Comments must be submitted on or before November 23, 2009.

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The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

PRESS RELEASE
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Agency Initiatives Part of Administration-Wide Effort

WASHINGTON – Playing a key part in an Obama Administration-wide effort to advance opportunities for workers with disabilities, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission (EEOC) will hold town hall meetings throughout the nation and offer workshops on new federal regulations and hiring procedures.

"The EEOC is pleased to join the President in pressing to enfranchise individuals with disabilities to participate to the fullest extent possible in the American workplace," said Acting EEOC Chairman Stuart J. Ishimaru. "We're proud to play a lead role in the Administration's initiative, and to have the weight of the White House behind this vital effort."

Acting EEOC Vice Chair Christine M. Griffin said, "For too long, Americans with disabilities have been pushed to the rear of the hiring line. The EEOC's town hall meetings and workshops, in concert with other Administration measures, should position workers with disabilities for a fair chance at a federal job."

The Office of Personnel Management and the Departments of Labor and Justice will also play major roles in the initiatives, which the President announced Monday as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The Obama Administration is taking steps to ensure fair and equal access to employment for all Americans, particularly the 54 million people in this country living with disabilities, President Obama announced. "As the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government and its contractors can lead the way by implementing effective employment policies and practices that increase opportunities and help workers achieve their full potential. We must also rededicate ourselves to fostering an inclusive work culture that welcomes the skills and talents of all qualified employees."

The EEOC and DOJ's Civil Rights Division will hold four town hall meetings throughout the nation to share information and gather comments about proposed regulations in the recently enacted Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act. Each town hall meeting will consist of two sessions, one for disability advocates and one for the employer community, offering opportunities for both the business and disability communities to comment in person. The meetings will take place by Nov. 20 in Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco and New Orleans.

In addition, as part of a Federal Government-wide job fair for people with disabilities during early Spring 2010, the EEOC and other agencies will provide workshops throughout the day on a variety of topics involving reasonable accommodations for Federal workers and applicants. At the job fair, people with disabilities should be able to register, submit materials and perhaps get hired on the spot.

The Administration initiatives follow EEOC action last month to expand opportunities for people with disabilities by returning the ADA to the broad and strong civil rights statute that Congress originally intended it to be, and smoothing the road for those seeking protection under the ADA.

On Sept. 16, the EEOC approved a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) revising its regulations to provide that an individual seeking protection under the ADA establish that he or she has a disability consistent with the original, expansive intent of Congress when it enacted the statute in 1990. The NPRM carries a 60-day period for public comment.

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing Title I of the ADA, which prohibits employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The statute requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to employees and job applicants with disabilities—defined as people with mental or physical impairments that substantially limit a major life

activity, persons with a record of a disability, or who, while not actually disabled, are regarded as disabled.

The ADA Amendments Act, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2009, states that Congress expects the EEOC to revise its regulations to conform to changes made by the Act, and expressly authorizes the EEOC to do so.

Consistent with the ADAAA, the NPRM emphasizes that the definition of disability -- an impairment that poses a substantial limitation in a major life activity -- must be construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of the ADA, and should not require extensive analysis; that major life activities include "major bodily functions"; that mitigating measures, such as medications and devices that people use to reduce or eliminate the effects of an impairment, are not to be considered when determining whether someone has a disability; and that impairments that are episodic or in remission, such as epilepsy, cancer, and many kinds of psychiatric impairments, are disabilities if they would "substantially limit" major life activities when active. The regulation also provides a more straightforward way of demonstrating a substantial limitation in the major life activity of working, and implements the ADAAA's new standard for determining whether someone is "regarded as" having a disability.

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. Further information about the EEOC is available on its web site at www.eeoc.gov.