

## EEOC CLAIMS REACH HIGHEST VOLUME SINCE 2002

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received 82,792 private sector discrimination charges in fiscal 2007, a 9 percent jump over the previous year and the commission's highest volume of charges since 2002. Race discrimination, retaliation, and sex discrimination were the most frequently alleged violations by individuals submitting charges to the EEOC, with retaliation charges reaching a record-high level of 26,663. For the first time, retaliation accounted for the second-highest charge category as the number of retaliation charges received by the EEOC has doubled since fiscal 1992. Race discrimination remains the most common claim made to the EEOC, and in fiscal 2007, the commission received 30,510 race bias charges, up 12 percent from fiscal 2006 and at their highest level since fiscal 1994. The numbers represent final figures on the EEOC charge activity for fiscal 2007. The commission previously had reported preliminary fiscal 2007 statistics in an annual performance and accountability report prepared for Congress and the White House Office of Management and Budget.

The EEOC says the increase in charges "may be due to a combination of factors," including greater awareness of federal anti-discrimination laws, changing economic conditions, and increased diversity and demographic shifts in the U.S. workforce. "Corporate America needs to do a better job of proactively preventing discrimination and addressing complaints promptly and effectively," says EEOC Chair Naomi Earp. "To ensure that the equality of opportunity becomes a reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, employers need to place a premium on fostering inclusive and discrimination-free work environments for all individuals."

The EEOC indicates it received a record-high 5,587 pregnancy discrimination charges in fiscal 2007 as well as 12,510 sexual harassment charges, with the latter number rising for the first time since fiscal 2000. A record 16 percent of the sexual harassment charges were filed by men. Age discrimination charges totaled 19,103, up 15 percent from fiscal 2006 and the largest number since fiscal 2002. The commission received 17,734 disability discrimination charges, a 14 percent increase over fiscal 2006 and the highest level since fiscal 1998.

The commission also reports that it recovered \$345 million in monetary relief for charging parties in fiscal 2007, up 26 percent from the previous year. About \$55 million was obtained through EEOC litigation and more than \$290 million was collected through administrative enforcement.

The EEOC resolved 72,442 private sector charges, with a "historically high" merit factor rate of 23 percent. Merit factor resolutions include mediation and other settlements and cause findings, which if not successfully conciliated are considered for litigation. The commission says it resolved a record 8,649 charges through its voluntary national mediation program, up 5 percent from fiscal 2006. It adds that as of the end of fiscal 2007, it had reached 1,269 universal agreements to mediate with employers subject to the commission's jurisdiction. The EEOC filed 336 merits lawsuits in fiscal 2007, including 116 class cases featuring multiple aggrieved parties.

The agency enforces Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Equal Pay Act in private sector employment. It also helps enforce Title VII and other anti-discrimination laws in federal employment, but separate statistics are kept regarding the federal sector.

More information about EEOC's fiscal 2007 charge and enforcement data is available at <http://www.eeoc.gov>.

(Source: BNA, *Daily Labor Report*, No. 44, March 6, 2008, pp. A2-A3.)