U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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TELEPHONIC MEETING

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

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The Commission convened via teleconference, at 4:00 p.m., MARTIN R. CASTRO, Chairman, presiding.

PRESENT:

MARTIN R. CASTRO, Chairman

ABIGAIL THERNSTROM, Vice Chair

TODD F. GAZIANO, Commissioner

GAIL L. HERIOT, Commissioner

PETER N. KIRSANOW, Commissioner

DAVID KLADNEY, Commissioner

MICHAEL YAKI, Commissioner

KIMBERLY TOLHURST, Delegated Authority of the Staff Director

STAFF PRESENT:

CHRISTOPHER BYRNES, Senior

Attorney-Adviser to the Office of the

Staff Director

PAMELA DUNSTON

LILLIAN DUNLAP

ALFREDA GREENE

KALANI LEE

TINALOUISE MARTIN

PETER MINARIK

DAVID MUSSATT

LENORE OSTROWSKY, Acting Chief, PAU

MICHELLE RAMEY

JOHN RATCLIFFE, Chief, Budget

ANGELA TREVINO

VANESSA WILLIAMS

AUDREY WRIGHT

COMMISSIONER ASSISTANTS PRESENT:

NICHOLAS COLTEN

ALEC DEULL

TIM FAY

DOMINIQUE LUDVIGSON

JOHN MARTIN

ALISON SOMIN

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But when we looked closely at the specifics of the

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draft appropriations, it indicated that \$800,000 from our budget was going to be proposed to be transferred to the EEOC, specifically to the EEOC's Office of Inspector General, to act as Inspector General for our agency due to alleged chronic financial and management problems at our agency.

2.1

So when we saw that, that was circulated to all of us. And what I want to do is have a discussion today. Having seen that, I reached out to some of the contacts on Friday evening that I have in the Senate, in particular, Senator Durbin's office and Senator Leahy's office, both from appropriations, to try to get some additional information as the information that was on the website for the CJS Subcommittee was not more instructive basically than what I just mentioned to you all.

So in the interim -- and the concern here obviously is twofold essentially. One we don't have a problem, at least from my perspective, we don't have a problem with having an Inspector General look at our agency, although I think it's based on outdated information.

There are a couple of concerns in there.

The agency that they are asking to act in this

capacity is an agency that we have some oversight or

monitoring responsibility for. And, secondly, the amount of 800,000 coupled with the additional \$188,000 proposed reduction in our appropriation is a devastating cut to our agency. And it's also out of proportion with the budget of the EEOC's IG versus the percentage of our budget that's going to them.

2.1

And so I expressed those general concerns to the folks and to the contacts I have at Durbin's and Leahy's offices. And they were not specifically familiar with what had transpired at CJS but indicated they were going to try to provide some additional information.

I was hoping to have additional background for this call to bring you up to speed on. I don't have any specifics yet as to where this is coming from, who put this into the markup or why.

I do know that I have been told that this is far from over, that this is not something necessarily we should panic about at this point because there are many steps that need to be taken before any appropriation is finalized from the point of markup to ultimately going to the full Senate and then into conference committee. This may not be ultimately resolved until sometime around Thanksgiving or later.

Having said that, I wanted to brief you all on everything that I know and then hear from you any questions and possibly come up with some steps going forward. I would suggest that we probably would want to wait until we get further information as to the background as to why this is happening before we start any balls in motion to educate members of the Senate Appropriation Committee further, but having said that, I want to open it up for some questions.

2.1

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF
DIRECTOR TOLHURST: Marty, this is Kim. Because we're
on the phone, if commissioners could say their name
before you make a comment for the Court Reporter?

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Marty, this is Kirsanow.

First of all, I agree with everything you said. And thanks very much for jumping on this thing. I think it's absurd that \$800,000 be dedicated to the EEOC for purposes of an IG of an agency that the budget is only 10 times larger than the entire amount appropriated for the IG ostensibly.

At the Pentagon, they have a \$50 billion IG, but it may be a wise thing after we have gotten all of the information to see if -- just as you have,

to go to our respective contacts, anybody that we know on the Hill and see if we can convince them that this is, first of all, unnecessary and the money would be put toward better use if it were incorporated within our budget.

2.1

I spent some time today. And Vice Chair
Thernstrom knows this. We went through a number of
different iterations of Altercept to make sure that
agency funds were being spent in a responsible
fashion, that we have full accountability because the
books were in bad shape for a period of time, and have
made significant strides toward that. We are not
anywhere near where we were before. And having an IG
at this particular time makes absolutely no sense.

VICE CHAIR THERNSTROM: I do concur on that history. I would --

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: That's Vice Chair Thernstrom who is talking now.

VICE CHAIR THERNSTROM: Oh, I'm sorry.

This is Thernstrom, Vice Chair Thernstrom.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: This is Gaziano. I have a question first and then perhaps a comment.

I should have studied the draft legislation. Is this a proposal just for the -- since it's an appropriation, I suppose it's not a permanent

1 appointment. This is just a one-year --

2.1

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF DIRECTOR TOLHURST: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: -- sort of appointment. I would suggest that we can point out that, regardless of where the money comes from, this amount of money to study us may not be necessary given that our books are in order, but we shouldn't appear, like the Chairman said, too opposed to an Inspector General.

My concerns, you know, mimic his two concerns. It is absolutely unacceptable to have the, or in my view, I'll say a little stronger, absolutely unacceptable to have the EEOC's IG play that role when EEOC has been fairly uncooperative of late in our requests. And we have pending reports.

They are one of the three big agencies, I would say, that we are responsible for overseeing:

Civil Rights Division, maybe OCR being the other.

If Congress wants to appoint an IG for one year or more years, then we should suggest that, at least since half of us are appointed from Congress, that this is how the IG for GAO would be more appropriate or the IG from the Library of Congress.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Mr. Chair,

Kirsanow here again. Todd, those are very good points. I will say personally I am adamantly opposed to the appointment of an IG. I think it's ridiculous to have an IG over this particular agency at this particular time.

2.1

I guess I'm not constitutionally opposed to the concept of an IG, but we have gone through GAO review. We have gone through at least -- and Vice Chair Thernstrom can remind me if I'm wrong. My recollection is in the last five to six years, we have three different types of reviews. And we have requested them at times to make sure that everything was in order.

It's not just simply the size of the budget quoted in the IG nor the conflict of interest, which I concur are problematic, but it is the simple notion of having an IG with respect to this agency at this particular time.

I think this agency is doing a remarkable job given the staffing that we have gotten. And if they wanted to improve the ability of this agency to function, they would dedicate that \$800,000 to making sure we have appropriate personnel systems in place so that we could function the way we were supposed to be.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: I agree. I think

it's more of the way we just present the argument. I think to say that we shouldn't have any oversight, though, might provoke the opposite reaction. I think maybe another way of putting it is that you can employ GAO at any time to oversee us, but we're a little, teeny agency that's under-funded. We don't have but about a third of our staff positions that we are able to fill.

2.1

But, you know, if you all want to, if any member of Congress or committee, I suppose, wants to direct CRS to study us or wants to direct GAO to look into us, they're free to do so. It is sort of a waste to dedicate -- then make your argument, Pete. It seems like a little bit of a waste of money, certainly to me, to have dedicated funds that, once appropriated, almost have to be spent studying us, regardless of what the initial investigation by those officials yields.

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF DIRECTOR TOLHURST: This is Kim.

Just for some context, those of you who didn't know it, I think it was Nick Colten that pointed out to me the CJS Subcommittee on the record noted that they were very, very gung-ho about IGs.

And so it's not directed at us. Although I certainly

Page 13 agree with Commissioner Kirsanow, it is not directed 1 at us. 2 I think that they are siccing IGs on a lot 3 of folks. 4 CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Okay. 5 That's good to 6 know. 7 Do any other commissioners want to comment 8 or ask questions? 9 (No response.) 10 CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Okay. Well, here's my 11 thought. So I am hoping to be able to connect with 12 the staffer that is on CJS that is responsible for 13 this to get a better idea of what the thinking is behind this and what opportunities to educate them 14 further about the need or lack thereof for these kinds 15 16 of resources to be directed our away. Once we have that better idea, my thought 17 would be assuming that we need to further educate our 18 19 senators, my thought would be that at that time we 20 might want to reach out to those senators who are on 2.1 the CJS Subcommittee that we know or have 22 relationship with well as as those Senate 23 Appropriations senators who --

This is Gail, by the way.

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COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Who are the members?

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Yes?

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Who are the members?

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CHAIRMAN CASTRO: It's probably the largest committee that the Senate has. We can circulate the CJS members, but basically on the Democratic side, it's Mikulski, Inouye, Kohl, Leahy, Reed, Lautenberg, Nelson, Pryor, Sherrod Brown. On the Republican side, it's Hutchison, Shelby, McConnell, Alexander, Murkowski, Johnson, Collins, and Graham and other senators. So tier one would be the CJS senators.

Tier two would be the other Appropriations
Senate members, which were Harkin, Murray, Durbin,
Johnson, Landrieu on the Democrat side and on the
Republican side Cochran, Kirk, Coats, Blunt, Moran,
and Hoeven.

But I think at this point, it's probably premature to do that. My sense is that if it turns out that this is something that you need to further educate folks beyond just the staff, that would be my thought.

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF
DIRECTOR TOLHURST: I just emailed all the
commissioners the link to all the names.

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Okay.

Page 15 This is Kladney COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: 1 2 here. Can I speak? CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Yes. 3 4 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Let me just say that we ought to direct somebody on the staff to put 5 6 together those three reports and summarize them with 7 an executive summary so that we can be ready to 8 present them when necessary. And they should be 9 circulated among the commissioners. 10 VICE CHAIR THERNSTROM: Good idea. 11 is Thernstrom. Good idea. 12 COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: This is Todd. 13 Depending on what the reaction is, too, on the Senate side, I think another step would be to talk 14 with the House appropriators in due turn. 15 CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Absolutely, yes. 16 17 can't ignore that. And that's another one that's still sitting out there, which put out an \$8 million 18 19 budget on us. So at some point we'll need to also reach out to them in the same manner and educate them 20 about the status of the agency. 2.1 22 Obviously their \$8 million version, 23 there's 8 million for different reasons than the

Senate version. And so at some point we'll probably

have to talk to the Conference Committee members as

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well. Hopefully we won't. -- Okay?

2.1

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF
DIRECTOR TOLHURST: I think the fear is that in
reconciliation, if they put the numbers together to go
down towards the House number but leave the Senate IG
in, that we basically can't function.

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Either way it's crippling. So, as I said, hopefully I will have some further intelligence as to what the purpose and the permanence, at least for this fiscal year, is of that or whether it's an ability to address it so that it looks different once it is shot out of the Senate.

Any other questions?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Hearing none, then what I can do -- and, Madam Acting General Counsel, let me know if this is appropriate -- once I have additional information to share, would we need to schedule another meeting such as this or could it be circulated to all the commissioners in a manner other than a phone call?

DELEGATED THE AUTHORITY OF THE STAFF DIRECTOR TOLHURST: If you have just information, you can email it or call them later.

CHAIRMAN CASTRO: Okay. All right. So

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1	that's where we'll leave it, then, unless there are
2	any other questions or thoughts or suggestions. Okay.
3	Well, I want to thank everybody for making
4	yourselves available today. Again, I wish I had had a
5	little bit more information by the time this call took
6	place, but we will keep moving ahead.
7	(Whereupon, there was a chorus of
8	"Thanks.")
9	(Whereupon, the foregoing matter was
10	concluded at 4:21 p.m.)
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<u>C E R T I F I C A T E</u>

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Telephonic Meeting

Before: US CCR

Date: 09-20-11

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Court Reporter

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