UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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TELEPHONIC MEETING

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THURSDAY

OCTOBER 8, 2009

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The Meeting convened telephonically, pursuant to notice at 5:15 p.m., Gerald A. Reynolds, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

GERALD A. REYNOLDS, CHAIRMAN

PETER N. KIRSANOW, COMMISSIONER

ASHLEY L. TAYLOR, COMMISSIONER

GAIL HERIOT, COMMISSIONER

TODD F. GAZIANO, COMMISSIONER

STAFF PRESENT:

MARTIN DANNENFELSER, STAFF DIRECTOR

STAFF PRESENT:

DAVID BLACKWOOD, General Counsel, OGC
CHRISTOPHER BYRNES, RPCU
DEMITRIA DEA
PAMELA A. DUNSTON, Chief, ASCD
ROBERT LERNER, Asst. Deputy Director
TINALOUISE MARTIN, Director, OM
EMMA MONROIG, Solicitor
LENORE OSTROWSKY

COMMISSIONER ASSISTANTS PRESENT:

TIM FAY

DOMINIQUE LUDVIGSON

KIMBERLY SCHULD

RICHARD SCHEMCHEL

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5:23 P.M.

PROCEEDINGS

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OPERATOR: Good afternoon. My name is

Jamie and I will be your conference operator today.

At this time I would like to welcome everyone to the

Commission meeting conference call.

All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. If you should need assistance during the call, please press star, then a zero, and an operator will come back on line to assist you.

Thank you, Mr. Reynolds. You may begin your conference.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Thank you. Good afternoon. This is Chairman Reynolds. It is 5:23

Eastern Daylight Time on October 8, 2009. We're having a telephonic meeting with all of the Commissioners participating from different locations.

I will call the name of each Commissioner in order to determine if there's a quorum to hold a meeting.

Vice Chair Thernstrom?

(No response.)

Commissioner Gaziano?

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Here.

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2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

3 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: First item, I move to 4 approve the agenda. Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Kirsanow seconds.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Any proposed changes?

(No response.)

Okay, I have one. I propose that we table discussion of the National Conference. We want to wait until we have some representation from the Democratic Commissioners.

Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Second.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Discussion?

(No response.)

Okay, we're just voting for the amendment.

17 Commissioner Gaziano, how do you vote?

18 | COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Could we move for

19 the agenda, as amended, with the friendly amendment?

20 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: That will work. I

21 vote aye.

22 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Kirsanow?

23 | COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Taylor?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Aye.

And Commissioner 1 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: 2. Heriot? 3 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Yes. 4 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, the vote is 5 unanimous. 6 MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS 7 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, bear with me. 8 The Staff Director informs me that the Office of 9 Management and Budget has requested that the 10 Commission submit two budget estimates for Fiscal Year The first would be a flat-line budget at the 11 2010 level of \$9.4 million. And second would be a 12 13 budget that reflects a 5 percent rescission to that

> Copies of these budget proposals and related documents sent to Commissioners were Friday, September 18th and then again yesterday evening.

amount to the level of \$8.93 million.

Mr. Staff Director, please provide Commissioners with a description of the staff's recommendations regarding each of these budgets? MR. DANNENFELSER: Thank you, Mr.

Chairman.

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We started with the premise that there would be built-in costs from cost of living adjustments for staff and other basic operations that tend to increase in the neighborhood of four to five percent per year. And from that, worked from a \$228,968 shortfall with the flat-line budget. We took some reductions in travel and rent in there and also had savings of about \$145,000 that we projected in IT savings for 2011. This was accomplished by the purchase of several PCs and laptops during FY 2009 with end-of-year funds instead of what was otherwise projected for purchase in 2011.

2.

We had a delay of a project to establish Regional Office connectivity to the agency shared common computer drive and the postponement of the purchase of new desktop software in the Regional Offices.

We also realized some savings by phasing in biometric identification tokens instead of bringing about immediate agency-wide implementation that produced a 57 percent savings in that particular area. And we identified and reduced some redundant costs in the areas of printing, communication, and contractual services. And on page five of the budget narrative, there is a chart that delineates those particular savings in that area.

With regard to the five percent reduction

budget which is another five percent beyond that flatline budget, the main thing we did there was in the
area of personnel. We had currently three positions
that are budgeted in 2010 that are not filled. They
are the Deputy Staff Director position, the secretary
in the Office of the Staff Director, and a social
scientist in the Office of Civil Rights Evaluation.
So we projected that those positions would not be
filled in 2011 and we also eliminated \$50,000 that was
projected for the employee bonus pool in that
particular, under that particular scenario which is
certainly not something that we would normally choose
to do, but given the tough decisions that would have
to be made under that type of budget, we made that
decision.

2.

So I think those are the highlights, Mr. Chairman, but I would be happy to address any other specific questions that Commissioners might have.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Questions? Comments?

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: I'll have an amendment in a minute, but I don't have any questions for the Staff Director at this time.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Heriot?

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: No.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Taylor?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Not at this time.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Kirsanow?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: No questions.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, Commissioner

Gaziano?

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COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Thank you. With due regard to the OMB request, I am going to move for a slight increase in our two budget amounts that we submit for FY 2011.

Let me just briefly explain my reasoning. For the past several years, we've made requests of \$12 million and that's been our, I think, our most sincere estimate of what we would need to fully fund the vacant positions, but it doesn't seem realistic that those sort of requests are being favorably considered. So I think a more modest request might be in order. But I do note, in sort of coming up with the amount, that, according to bills currently pending and other news reports, the following civil rights agencies are slated to get -- that we are supposed to help review and somewhat oversee -- are getting huge The EEOC is slated to get a \$23 million increases. increase over last year. The Civil Rights Division at Justice is slated to get a \$22 million increase and legal positions. wants to create 54 new The

Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program is slated to get a \$27.4 million increase and that's a 25 percent increase over previous years.

2.

Jerry's old office at Education, the Office of Civil Rights is slated to get an increase, but not by quite as much. So I submit that although it would be nice to not only not get 54 new legal positions, but if we could just have our Office of the General Counsel perhaps instead of having two of seven slots filled, three of seven, that might help us monitor these other civil rights agencies.

So, with that, I propose that everywhere in the budget where we have asked for the proposed budget, where we've asked for \$9,400,000, that we ask for \$9,950,000 and, with a five percent rescission figure, that would work out to be \$9,452,500, and the only other request or change that I would include in my motion is on page six, under B, it begins "as further required" and change the word "required" to "as further requested."

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Kirsanow seconds.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Well, hold on. A few

comments. We sent out, in our official capacity,

we've sent out several letters and I think that that is -- that's Commission work that should be reflected, at least we should consider including that type of policy discussion into this document, and isn't it also true that several of you have testified on Capitol Hill and, if so, was that done in your capacity as a Commissioner or in your individual capacity? If it's the former, I would also think that the documents should reflect those activities also.

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COMMISSIONER HERIOT: The occasions on which I've testified, the call went out to the Commission, not to me personally. So whether my comments were on behalf of the Commission, I don't think that's necessarily fair to say, but the request was made to send a Commissioner to Capitol Hill and that's what we did.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: You presume then you testified in your individual as a Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: As an individual Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Sure.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: So yes, I think that's Commission activity.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: This is Kirsanow.

I testified in my individual capacity, but I am

readily identified as a Commissioner of the Civil Rights Commission.

2.

In addition to that, the matters upon which I testify are within the purview of the Commission and supported by, generally supported in some measure, by research done by our special assistants.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Did Commissioner Yaki testify on Capitol Hill?

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: He also testified on the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act before the House Committee on Natural Resources. So the answer to that is yes.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, so I think that it would be -- that we should consider having those contributions to public policy discussions reflected in this document, as well as the policy statements that have gone out in some of our letters, at least those letters that have gone out as a part of a Commission vote.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Mr. Chairman, this is Commissioner Gaziano for the record. You also reminded me that some of our letters are for information at EEOC and the Department of Justice, of which we have not been favorably blessed with

responses. As a matter of fact, EEOC said that it would be somewhat burdensome for them to have to respond to us and we could just look at their website. Again, this is another reason why I think at least a modest increase in our budget is appropriate, if these other agencies we're trying to look at are getting \$22 and \$23 million increases.

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CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Any other comments?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: I think those increases are so that they can more readily reply to our information requests.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: I hope so.

COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, this is the court reporter. Could I ask people to please identify themselves before they speak. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: All right. May I have a motion that the Staff Director be directed to finalize and submit to OMB the 2011 budget estimate as well as the budget estimate with the five percent rescission, but making the changes that have been agreed upon during this exchange?

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: I so move if you mean the figures that I've included.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: The figures, the inclusion of discussion of the testimony on Capitol

Hill, as well as the policy issues that we've dealt 1 2. with in some of the letters that we sent out. 3 COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Sure, I'll accept 4 that or move that or accept that as a friendly 5 amendment to my motion. 6 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay. 7 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Kirsanow seconds. CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Do we need discussion? 8 9 Commissioner Gaziano? 10 COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Yes. CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Kirsanow? 11 12 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yes. CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Taylor? 13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: 14 Yes. CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Heriot? 15 16 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: I'm going to abstain on this one. 17 18 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay. Let the record 19 reflect that Commissioners Gaziano, Kirsanow, Taylor and the Chairman voted in favor of the motion and 20 Commissioner Heriot abstained. 21 22 PROGRAM PLANNING CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, next up is a 23 2.4 discussion vote on a letter to Attorney General Holder

that Commissioner Kirsanow circulated on September 23

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regarding ACORN in light of the recent activities that have cast the organization in the news once again.

The letter was recirculated again yesterday evening via email.

2.

Commissioner Kirsanow, would you like to speak to your letter?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Well, we've already spoken about it. This is Kirsanow.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Do I have -- the copy that was attached to Marty's email, is that the current copy or is there a different version now?

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Of the -- I believe that the -- if you're referring to Marty's email that was sent out yesterday evening, I believe that's the latest version.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: I have to make sure I'm looking at the right thing here.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Kirsanow?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yes. I think we've had discussion on this, a significant amount of discussion on it and, again, I simply move the Commission approve the letter to Attorney General Holder, as amended.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Taylor seconds.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, I have a few

1 friendly amendments.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Me, too.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, you go first.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: One of mine is just a ridiculous quibble. And that is the use of the word "disenfranchise" which is a perfectly legitimate word, but it also competes with disfranchise, which is also a perfectly legitimate word, and partisans of disfranchise actually sometimes believe that they are right and that disenfranchise is wrong. So, in the interest of most conservative grammar, I would go for disfranchise.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: I would accept that.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: The other one is that I would prefer not to refer specifically to RICO, but rather refer to federal law.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Kirsanow accepts that too.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Is that it,
Commissioner Heriot?

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Yes, it is.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, on the first line of the last paragraph at the bottom of the first page, I would ask that we amend the letter to insert

the words "several Commissioners" in place of "we" so that it would read: "On October 28th, several Commissioners wrote to your predecessor, Attorney General Michael Mukasey."

2.

Commissioner Kirsanow, are you comfortable with the --

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: I am.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Yes, because I think
I was not one of those who wrote. I don't remember
that letter.

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Yes, that's my recollection as well from my records. So I prefer that wording as well. This is Commissioner Gaziano.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay. And the second change, I'd like to change -- well, looking at the last paragraph of the letter, first sentence, I'd like to change the word "recent" to "former" so that the sentence would read, "According to press accounts, a former ACORN Board Member, Marcel Reid" yadda, yadda, yadda.

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: I'll accept that also.

24 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Any further 25 amendments?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Mr. Chair, I would 1 2 move that we approve the letter to Attorney General 3 Holder, as amended by the friendly amendments. 4 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Gaziano, 5 how do you vote? 6 COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: 7 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Kirsanow? 8 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yes. 9 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Heriot? 10 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Yes. 11 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Commissioner Taylor? 12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes. 13 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, the motion 14 passes unanimously and that concludes the meeting. 15 COMMISSIONER GAZIANO: Could I just make 16 one quick motion? I move that the letter so approved 17 by a majority be circulated to any others, or is that 18 necessary to see if they want to join in who are not 19 at the meeting? 20 CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Sure, we can -- well, Pete, do you have any concerns with that suggestion? 21 22 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: No, not off the 23 top of my head, although I think everyone had an 24 opportunity to weigh in.

Okay, leave it to

COMMISSIONER GAZIANO:

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the person originating the letter then?

COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Can we do this, because this is really more administrative than anything else. If one of our special assistants could indicate that this letter was about to go out and that they would give a window period of until noon tomorrow in which the other Commissioners who were not present on the call can voice whether or not to include their signatories onto the letter.

CHAIRMAN REYNOLDS: Okay, we have a plan.

All right, folks, that concludes the meeting. Thank
you very much.

(Whereupon, at 5:43 p.m., the meeting was concluded.)

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