

Employee Advisory Committee Minutes

The Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) met on February 9, 2005.

Those in attendance were: Special Counsel Scott Bloch, Grace Rojas (via tele-conference), Dennis Whitebook (via tele-conference), Linda Myers, Caroline Heard, Hope Riley, Frank Greenwell, Ellen Oskoui and Stephanie Polk

The focus of the meeting was the Office Reorganization. What follows is a summary of our discussion.

The Detroit Field Office

Mr. Bloch indicated that one person that had previously accepted the reassignment to the Detroit office has taken another job. Therefore, the problem of how to staff the office still remains. It was noted that it would be counterproductive to have another round of directed re-assignments due to the declination rate that resulted from the first announcement of re-assignments. In addition, this could lead to decreased unit cohesion, and the lowered morale within the agency. Suggestions as to how to staff the office were given to Mr. Bloch.

Two employees have volunteered for short term TDY to Detroit to help with staff shortages. Another suggestion was to create an in-house mentoring program where new hires are given a mentor to help them adapt to the agency and the workload quickly.

Bob Wise had a collection of resumes from a previous vacancy announcement. Some of the applicants from those resumes indicated that they were willing to relocate. Mr. Bloch indicated that IOSC will look at the resumes of those willing to relocate and discuss them with senior staff of the agency. Another thought expressed was to post vacancy announcements both internally and externally.

One person suggested sending members of SPU to the Detroit office. The "special project" would consist of setting up the new field office and they could recruit and hire staff for the office while on site. Mr. Bloch noted that he would consider this option, but noted that the USERRA unit is part of SPU and the staff assigned to that unit needed to stay in D.C. to address the needs particular to the pilot program under the new law.

ADR Program

Mr. Bloch noted that IOSC was working on how to continue to operate the ADR program. It was suggested that there could be one representative to handle ADR matters in each field office as a collateral duty. There was also a suggestion to leave the ADR program in headquarters. Several others echoed that suggestion. They noted that the reason that was given to move the program to Detroit was that under Cary Sklar's leadership the program functioned extremely well. Because he has declined to move to Detroit, that reason no longer appears valid. It was also pointed out that there is a cost for

moving files back and forth from different offices, there are security risks when transporting files, and the ADR applicant pool is deeper in Washington than in Detroit.

Case Distribution

IOSC is considering the best way to handle case file distribution as employees who have declined the re-assignment leave the agency. One consideration is to try to get as many cases closed as possible prior to the employees departure. This would be similar to the ACT team that worked to quickly close cases. Those staff that has been assigned to the USERRA will continue with their PPP cases along with the USERRA cases as long the amount of cases the unit receives from the Department of Labor is manageable.

The agency will also be getting interns for the summer that will be able to assist with getting cases closed.

Congressional Inquiry

There have been several articles in the press addressing congressional concern over the reassignment. Mr. Bloch pointed out that IOSC is responding to all questions from Congress. In addition, if GAO requests an investigation IOSC will cooperate. However, the reorganization will move forward as planned.

Phase 2 of the Reorganization

Operating Procedures for all divisions are being drafted. The purpose of the procedures is to establish ways to move cases forward efficiently and effectively.