

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

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CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION TO HOLD BRIEFING ON “SPECIFYING ENGLISH AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF THE WORKPLACE: EVERY EMPLOYER’S RIGHT OR VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW?”

Washington, DC – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a briefing on Friday, December 12, 2008, to examine whether employers have the legal authority to specify English as the language of the workplace. Currently, businesses adopting such policies risk potential claims alleging discrimination based on national origin, a position often taken by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This briefing seeks to address competing viewpoints on this issue.

The panelists include: Reed Russell, Legal Counsel of the EEOC; Linda Chavez, a prominent Hispanic American, Chairman of the Center for Equal Opportunity and former Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; Richard Kidman, owner of RD’s Drive-In Restaurant and defendant in a suit brought by the EEOC; K.C. McAlpin, Executive Director of ProEnglish, a national nonprofit organization working to educate the public about the need to protect English as the nation’s common language; Kerry O’Brien, Senior Manager for the Legal Program of CASA de Maryland; and Timothy Riordan, partner in the law firm of Defrees and Fiske, who represented the defendant in *EEOC v. Synchro-Start*, a 1999 case involving an employer’s requirement that employees speak only English during working hours.

When: Friday, December 12, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

Where: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 624 9th St. NW, Room 540, Washington DC

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chair Abigail Thernstrom, Commissioners Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan D. Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, Jr., and Michael Yaki. Martin Dannenfels is the Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the general public.