



NEWS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OBSERVES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 10925 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ORDER MANDATING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN EMPLOYMENT

Washington, DC - March 9, 2011 - The American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA), an organization of affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity professionals, acknowledges the first presidential order mandating affirmative action in federal contractor workplaces. Executive Order 10925 was signed by President John F. Kennedy on March 6, 1961.

Executive Order 10925 imposed on all covered contractors a general obligation requiring positive steps designed to overcome obstacles to equal employment opportunity. In the order, the President incorporated two fundamental concepts: *nondiscrimination* and *affirmative action*.

SECTION 301. Except in contracts exempted in accordance with section 303 of this order, all government contracting agencies shall include in every government contract hereafter entered into the following provisions:

"In connection with the performance of work under this contract, the contractor agrees as follows:

"(1) the contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, creed, color, or national origin. The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. The contractor agrees to post in conspicuous places, available to employees and applicants for employment.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58863>

In signing the order, President Kennedy implemented the recommendations of President Eisenhower's Committee on Government Contracts, headed by Vice President Richard M. Nixon. The committee wrote:

Overt discrimination, in the sense that an employer actually refuses to hire solely because of race, religion, color, or national origin is not as prevalent as is generally believed. To a greater degree, the indifference of employers to establishing a positive policy of nondiscrimination hinders qualified applicants and employees from being hired and promoted on the basis of equality.

“Affirmative action was, at its inception, a bi-partisan issue, supported by Democrats and Republicans alike. It was also a call to take positive steps in removing the barriers to equal employment opportunity,” said Gregory T. Chambers, president of AAAA.

In fifty years there has been much progress for women and minorities in the workforce, higher education and in contracting. In 2011, we have more diversity in all of these sectors and in the White House itself. Much remains to be done, however, as evidenced in the nearly one-hundred thousand charges of discrimination filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission last year.

Since 1961, affirmative action policies have become law both in the United States and throughout the world. While controversial in some sectors, it remains one of the most effective means of removing barriers in hiring, promotions and pay, from the entry level to the executive suite.

Executive Order 10925 was modified by President Johnson’s Executive Order 11246 and subsequent laws that are now enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). “We acknowledge the foresight and courage of President John F. Kennedy in signing Executive Order 10925 in 1961,” added Mr. Chambers. “We must continue the legacy of the Kennedy Order and work to achieve the vision of equity and fairness through *positive* action in employment, education and government contracting.”

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Founded in 1974, the American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA) is a national not-for-profit association of professionals working in the areas of affirmative action, equal opportunity, and diversity. AAAA assists its members to be more successful and productive in their careers. It also promotes understanding and advocacy of affirmative action to enhance access and equality in employment, economic and educational opportunities.

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