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PART XI

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION GUIDELINES

Technical Amendments to the Procedural Regulations

[6570-06-M]

Title 29—Labor

CHAPTER XIV—EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

PART 1608—AFFIRMATIVE ACTION APPROPRIATE UNDER TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964, AS AMENDED

Adoption of Interpretative Guidelines

AGENCY: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

ACTION: Adoption of final Guidelines on Affirmative Action appropriate under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

SUMMARY: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission wishes to encourage voluntary action to eliminate employment discrimination, and hereby publishes its final Guidelines on Affirmative Action. Proposed Guidelines were published on December 28, 1977 (42 FR 64,826) for public comment. The Commission has now analyzed those comments and taken them into consideration in preparing its final Guidelines. The Preamble, below, describes the Commission's purpose for issuing these Guidelines and explains how the issues raised by the comments have been addressed. These Guidelines clarify the kinds of voluntary actions that are appropriate under Federal law. They describe the action the Commission will take when the procedures outlined herein have been followed. By elucidating the standards for voluntary action in these Guidelines, the Commission encourages affirmative action without resort to litigation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 20, 1979.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

An Overview of the Guidelines on Affirmative Action

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC", "the Commission") enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, ("Title VII," "the Act"), which makes it illegal to discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Act requires the Commission to investigate complaints and attempt to correct violations it discovers, informally and through conciliation, or, if necessary, through court action. The Act also authorizes private individuals to bring lawsuits if their complaints are not resolved to their satisfaction or within the statutory time period.

Since the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many employers, labor organizations, and other persons subject to the Act have altered employment systems to implement the purposes of Title VII by improving employment opportunities for previously excluded groups. Because of what Congress has called the "complex and pervasive" nature of systemic discrimination against minorities and women (see H.R. Rep. No. 92-238, 92nd Cong., 2nd Sess. 8 (1972)), these voluntary efforts often involve significant changes in employment relationships. Some of these actions have been challenged under Title VII, as conflicting with statutory language requiring that employment decisions not be based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin considerations. Accordingly, the Commission believes it is important to announce the legal principles which govern voluntary affirmative action under Title VII and other employment discrimination laws, so that persons subject to the Act have appropriate guidance. These Guidelines constitute the Commission's interpretation of Title VII, harmonizing the need to eliminate and prevent discrimination and to correct the effects of prior discrimination with the need to protect all individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Requests for guidance have been received by the Commission from persons subject to Title VII concerning the relationship between affirmative action and so-called "reverse discrimination." There is no separate concept under Title VII of "reverse discrimination." Discrimination against all individuals because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin is illegal under Title VII. *McDonald* v. *Sante Fe Trail Transportation Co.*, 427 U.S. 273 (1976).

To clarify the relationship between affirmative action and a countervailing claim of discrimination, a new section 1608.1 of these Guidelines sets forth the historical and legislative foundation for the Commission's interpretation of Title VII. Section 1608.1(b) explains that Congress enacted Title VII in order to overcome the effects of past and present employment practices which are part of a larger pattern of restriction, exclusion, discrimination, segregation and inferior treatment of minorities and women in many areas of life. Congress sought to accomplish this objective by establishing a national policy against discrimination in employment and encouraging voluntary affirmative action to eliminate barriers to equal employment opportunity. It is the Commission's interpretation that appropriate voluntary affirmative action, or affirmative action pursuant to an administrative or judicial requirement, does not constitute unlawful discrimination in violation of the Act.

It is essential to the effective implementation of Title VII that those who take appropriate voluntary affirmative action receive adequate protection against claims that their efforts constitute discrimination. The term affirmative action means those actions appropriate to overcome the effects of past or present practices, policies, or other barriers to equal employment opportunity. Section 1608.3 of these Guidelines identifies circumstances in which voluntary affirmative action is permissible under Title VII. When such circumstances exist, and a plan or program otherwise complies with these Guidelines, the Commission will find that there is no reasonable cause to believe that the affirmative action plan or program violates Title VII. See § 1608.10(a). In addition, § 1608.10(b) provides that where the plan or program is in writing and was adopted in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance upon these Guidelines, the Commission will provide the protection authorized under section 713(b)(1) of Title VII to the employer, labor organization, or other person taking the action. See *EEOC* v. *AT&T*, 419 F. Supp. 1022, 1055, n. 34 (E.D.Pa. 1976), *aff'd*, 556 F.2d 167 (3rd Cir. 1977), *cert. denied*, 98 S.Ct. 3145 (1978).

On December 28, 1977, at 42 FR 64826 the Commission published proposed "Guidelines on Remedial and/or Affirmative Action" in the Federal Register and invited comments from the public. Comments were received from almost 500 individuals and organizations. The paragraphs below summarize the major issues raised by the comments and indicate the way in which the final Guidelines address the concerns raised by the comments.

On December 11, 1978, the Commission voted to approve the Guidelines in final form. Pursuant to Executive Order 12067, the Guidelines were then distributed to all Federal agencies for their review. Comments received in this process are also reflected in the discussion below.

I. Change of Guidelines' Title

The proposed Guidelines were titled "Proposed Guidelines on Affirmative and/or Remedial Action" and the phrase "remedial and/or affirmative action" was utilized throughout the document. A number of comments questioned the difference, if any, between remedial action and affirmative action. The term "remedial" has been

dropped because of the possible erroneous implication that a violation of the law was required before affirmative action could be taken.

II. THE COMMISSION WILL PROCESS COMPLAINTS ALLEGING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ANY AGGRIEVED PERSON

Many of the comments interpreted the Guidelines as indicating a Commission position that whites or males are entitled to less protection against discrimination than minorities or females, and that the Commission would either ignore complaints filed by whites or males, or process them in a different manner from those filed by females and minorities. The Commission maintains its position, articulated prior to *McDonald* v. *Santa Fe Trail Transportation Co.*, 427 U.S. 273 (1976), that discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, is prohibited under Title VII, regardless of the individual or class against whom such discrimination is directed. See, e.g., Commission Decision No. 74-31, 7 FEP Cases 1326, 1328, CCH EEOC Decisions, ¶6404, (1973). The Commission will follow the same procedures in processing complaints filed by all individuals, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

To avoid any ambiguity on these issues, language in the proposed Guidelines suggesting that complaints filed by whites and males would be "dismissed" under certain circumstances has been amended. Proposed paragraph V stated that the Commission would "issue a notice of dismissal of the charge" when an affirmative action program conformed to the Guidelines' requirements. The word "dismissal" is a term of art used by the Commission in its procedural regulations to refer to all determinations other than "reasonable cause." Because its use was misconstrued in many comments, final sections have been amended by substituting the phrase "a determination of no reasonable cause" where such a finding is justified by the facts of the case.

III. CONSIDERATION OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, AND NATIONAL ORIGIN IN EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

Some commentators objected to the draft Guidelines because of their belief that Title VII requires that all employment decisions be made without consideration of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, regardless of the circumstances. This conclusion does not comport with United States Supreme Court decisions interpreting Title VII, nor with the recent decision in *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke*, 98 S. Ct. 2733 (1978) (discussed infra). In the Title VII cases, the Supreme Court has called upon employers "'* * * to self-examine and to self-evaluate their employment practices and to endeavor to eliminate, so far as possible, the last vestiges of an unfortunate and ignominious page in this country's history.'" *Albemarle Paper Co.* v. *Moody*, 422 U.S. 405, 418 (1975). See also, *Griggs* v. *Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 (1971).

Thus, the Supreme Court recognizes that persons subject to Title VII will consider race, sex and national origin in their analyses and evaluations. In addition, the Court has emphasized the concept of conciliation and voluntary action rather than litigation as the primary method of enforcing Title VII. See *Occidental Life Insurance Co. of California* v. *EEOC*, 432 U.S. 355 (1977). Voluntary action necessarily implies latitude to make a reasonable judgement as to whether action should be taken and the nature of such action.

At the same time, the Commission recognizes that considerations of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin are not permissible in other contexts. For example, in *McDonald* v. *Santa Fe Trail Transportation Co.*, 427 U.S. 273 (1976), the Court held that the anti-discrimination principle of Title VII could be invoked by white employees as well as minority employees. No question of affirmative action was involved. The Court held that disparate treatment violated Title VII, but specifically stated that its decision did not address any issues relating to affirmative action programs. *McDonald, supra*, at 280, n. 8. For the reasons set forth in § 1608.1, the Commission considers that these Guidelines are consistent with the statute, the Congressional intent behind it, and the decisions of the Supreme Court.

IV. TWO DIFFERENT JUSTIFICATIONS OF VOLUNTARY ACTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEEN TITLE VII AND EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 11246, As Amended

A number of comments indicated uncertainty as to the relationship in the proposed Guidelines between the references to Title VII and the references to the Executive Order. These commentators apparently understood the Guidelines to mean that affirmative action required by Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations would be lawful under Title VII *only* where the contractor has a reasonable basis for concluding that such action is necessary under Title VII. The structure of the Guidelines has been changed to clarify the Commission's original interpretation that action taken pursuant to, and in conformity with the Executive order, as amended, and its implementing regulations, does not violate Title VII.

The legislative history of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 shows that Congress repeatedly rejected limitations on affirmative action under the Executive Order, including the goals and timetables approach that had become by that time a central feature of the implementation of the Order. See, e.g., 118 Cong. Rec. 1385-1386 (1972) (remarks of Sen. Saxbe); 118 Cong. Rec. 1664-1665 (1972) (remarks of Sen. Javits); 118 Cong. Rec. 1676 (1972) (rejecting amendment offered by Sens. Allen and Ervin that would have prohibited requirements for certain types of affirmative action, including the goals approach, under the Executive Order); 118 Cong. Rec. 4918 (1972) (rejecting amendment offered by Sen. Ervin that would have applied section 703(j) of Title VII to the Executive Order).

The Commission concludes that Congress intended to permit the continuation of the Executive Order program which required affirmative action by government contractors. The Congress which acted to allow the Executive Order program to continue would not, in the same measure, invalidate it under Title VII. The statute should be construed to avoid such a contradictory conclusion, especially where such a conclusion would undermine the expressed Congressional purpose of opening employment opportunities to minorities and women who had in the past been denied such opportunities.

In the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Congress recognized the contractor's right to rely on affirmative action plans that had been approved under the Executive Order. See section 718 of Title VII. Furthermore, Congress in section 715 established the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinating Council (composed of the Secretary of Labor, the Chair of the EEOC, the Attorney General, the Chair of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, the Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, or their respective delegates) "to minimize effort, promote efficiency, and eliminate conflict, competition, duplication and inconsistency among * * * branches of the Federal Government responsible for the implementation and enforcement of equal opportunity legislation, orders, and policies." 42 U.S.C. 2000e-14. This coordination responsibility now rests in the Commission by virtue of 5 U.S.C. 901 et seq., as applied by Reorganization Plan No. 1 (1978), which was implemented by Executive Order 12067 (43 FR 28,967, July 30, 1978). In order to achieve the objectives of section 715 and Executive Order No. 12067, the Commission concludes that it must recognize compliance with the requirements of Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and

its implementing regulations, as a defense to a charge that the affirmative action compliance program is discriminatory. The Commission concludes that adherence to an affirmative action compliance program approved by an appropriate official of the Department of Labor or its authorized agencies is lawful under Title VII. This interpretation thus insures that government contractors will not be subject to inconsistent standards by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

Thus, the Commission recognizes that affirmative action by government contractors may be lawful under Title VII for either of two distinct reasons: (a) Such efforts constitute reasonable action to implement the legislative purposes of Title VII, or (b) the action was taken pursuant to, and in conformity with Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations. The Guidelines have been revised to reflect these two independent justifications for affirmative action under Title VII. A separate § 1608.5 governs affirmative action under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended.

The three step analytical process required under § 1608.4,, when action is being justified under Title VII, is not necessary under § 1608.5, when action is being justified as undertaken pursuant to an approved program under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended. The circumstances in which such affirmative action is required under the Executive Order and the nature of such affirmative action are established by the Department of Labor.

V. Appropriate Steps for Taking Voluntary Action

A number of comments suggested that the Guidelines did not clearly define the steps the Commission believes are appropriate in taking voluntary affirmative action. A new § 1608.4 has been added to explain the three step process applicable to action justified under Title VII: reasonable self analysis, reasonable basis for concluding that action is appropriate, and reasonable action to correct that situation. The process set forth in § 1608.4 should be utilized to determine whether the circumstances set forth in § 1608.3 are present. Section 1608.5 covers action pursuant to Executive Order No. 11246, as amended.

VI. Reasonable Self Analysis

Some commentators requested further elaboration on the meaning of the term "self analysis." Section 1608.4(a) has been amended to make it clear that there is no single mandatory method of conducting the self analysis, and to refer to the methodology used by government contractors under Revised Order 4 as a model which employers and others may use in conducting a self analysis. Whatever method is used, the primary objective must be to determine whether the employment practices operate as barriers to equal employment opportunity.

Some commentators suggested that the Guidelines may be subject to abuse unless the self analysis is required to be in writing. The Commission believes that the protection from Title VII liability which may be available under section 713(b)(1) should only be recognized where the affirmative action plan or program has been carefully and consciously developed. Accordingly, the section 713(b)(1) defense will be recognized by the Commission only where the analysis and the affirmative action plan or program are in writing and are adopted in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance upon these Guidelines. See §§ 1608.4(d) and 1608.10.

However, a respondent who has undertaken the analysis, self-evaluation, and development of an affirmative action plan of the type described in the Guidelines, but has not reduced the analysis and plan to writing, may assert these facts as a defense to a charge of discrimination. The analysis and plan need not be in writing because the Commission does not generally require that employer defenses be based on written documents. However, employers are encouraged to have written documentation since such written evidence would make it easier to establish that an analysis was conducted and that a plan or program exists. See § 1608.4(d)(2).

In response to comments which expressed concern that adoption of a plan or program might constitute an admission of discrimination, § 1608.4(d)(1) makes it clear that it is not necessary to state in writing the conclusion that a Title VII violation exists.

VII. The Guidelines Do Not Approve Inadequate Remedies

A number of commentators were concerned that violators of the Act could use the Guidelines and the section 713(b)(1) defense to shield themselves from liability for the underlying discrimination inadequately addressed by an affirmative action plan or program. The Guidelines do not lend themselves to this interpretation.

The proposed Guidelines stated in paragraph VII that the Guidelines were not intended to provide standards for determining whether voluntary action had fully remedied discrimination. The analysis and plan contemplated by these Guidelines will not establish whether discrimination existed before the plan was adopted. Furthermore, the plan cannot determine whether discrimination might take place subsequent to its adoption. In addition, the judgment as to whether affirmative action is sufficient to eliminate discrimination is a complex one which may take into account circumstances that may not have been included in the analysis which underlies the affirmative action plan. For these reasons the existence of the plan cannot provide the basis for determining whether discrimination existed, or whether the plan itself provided an adequate remedy for such discrimination. Therefore, the Guidelines state that they do not apply to a determination of the adequacy of an affirmative action plan to eliminate discrimination against previously excluded groups. Furthermore, the section 713(b)(1) defense is not involved in a determination of the adequacy of such a plan or program. Section 1608.11(a) is intended to make it clear that employers, labor organizations, or other persons who take affirmative action may still be liable under Title VII if the plan or program does not adequately remedy illegal discrimination.

VIII. No Admission of Discrimination Required

Another group of comments stated that, because the Guidelines do not require an admission or finding of discrimination, the Commission may thereby approve affirmative action which might constitute unlawful discrimination prohibited by Title VII. This interpretation is incorrect.

The proposed Guidelines stated in paragraph II that the lawfulness of affirmative action was not "dependent upon an admission, or a finding, or evidence sufficient to prove" that the person taking such action had actually violated Title VII. After careful analysis and consideration, the Commission is of the opinion that the statement, as amended, appearing in § 1608.4(b), represents an appropriate interpretation of Federal law and policy for the reasons set forth in § 1608.1(c).

These Guidelines provide a sufficient basis to determine whether affirmative action is appropriate. Persons subject to the Act should not, by taking reasonable affirmative action, be exposed to liability under the very Act they are seeking to implement. Similarly, the law should not force the employer or other person to speculate whether an arguable defense to a Title VII charge would be recognized by a court before taking affirmative action. Section 1608.4(b) makes it clear that this reasonable basis exists without regard to arguable defenses to a Title VII action.

IX. The Scope of Appropriate Voluntary Action

Several comments raised questions concerning the appropriate scope of voluntary affirmative action intended by the Guidelines. Some perceive the Commission's use of the words "ratios and other numerical remedies" in proposed Paragraph IV, in addition to the words "goals and timetables", as indicating that the Commission was endorsing "absolute quotas" or "fixed quotas" without regard to qualifications or the circumstances in which they were used. The words "ratios and other numerical remedies" have been omitted from these Guidelines in order to avoid ambiguity and to make it clear that any numerical objective is subject to the availability of sufficient applicants who are qualified by proper, validated standards.

Affirmative Action under these Guidelines must be reasonable and must be related to the problems disclosed by the self-analysis. A new § 1608.4(c) has been added to make this clear. Affirmative action under these Guidelines may include interim goals or targets. Such interim goals or targets for previously excluded groups may be higher than the percentage of their availability in the workforce so that the long term goal may be met in a reasonable period of time. In order to achieve such interim goals or targets, an employer may consider race, sex, and/or national origin in making selections from among qualified or qualifiable applicants. Courts have ordered actions of this kind in litigated cases and in consent decrees. *Carter* v. *Gallagher*, 452 F.2d 315 (8th Cir. 1972), *en banc, cert. denied* (98 S. Ct. 3145 (1978); *U.S.* v. *Allegheny-Ludlum Industries, Inc.*, 517 F.2d 826 (5th Cir. 1975), *cert. denied*, 425 U.S. 944 (1976).

X. Relevance of Certain Court Cases

A number of comments indicated that there were court decisions rendering inappropriate the approach taken by the Commission in these Guidelines. Because the proposed Guidelines were issued for comment prior to the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Regents of University of California* v. *Bakke*, 98 S. Ct. 2733 (1978), a number of commentators suggested that either the Guidelines were inappropriate in light of the decision of the California Supreme Court in that case, or that the Commission should wait until the U.S. Supreme Court had issued its opinion. As recommended, the Commission awaited the action of the Supreme Court in that case before promulgating these Guidelines. The Commission has reviewed these Guidelines in light of the opinions of the Justices of the Supreme Court in *Bakke*. The Commission concludes that these Guidelines are consistent with the action of the Supreme Court in that case.

In the *Bakke* case the university did not assert reliance on any detailed guidance and procedures for crafting an affirmative action plan. These Guidelines seek to provide such guidance and thereby to establish an appropriate legal foundation for voluntary action under Title VII.

Perhaps the case most frequently cited by the commentators as conflicting with the principles articulated in the proposed Guidelines was a split decision in *Weber* v. *Kaiser Aluminum Corp.*, 563 F.2d 216 (5th Cir. 1977), *cert. granted*, —— U.S. ——. *Weber*, however, was decided prior to *Bakke*, and therefore did not take into account the opinions in that case. In addition, it is fundamentally unfair to expose those subject to Executive Order No. 11246 to risks of liability under Title VII when they act in compliance with government requirements or when they act voluntarily and appropriately to achieve statutory objectives. Furthermore, the clarification provided by these Guidelines is necessary because the *Weber* decision may be interpreted to unduly interfere with the range of affirmative action which Congress intended to permit under Title VII.[1]

The Commission has examined all the decisions brought to its attention in the comments and other recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court and concludes that none of these decisions affect its interpretation of the circumstances in which affirmative action is lawful under Title VII.

By virtue of the authority vested in it by section 713 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-12, 78 Stat. 265, and after due consideration of all comments received, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission hereby issues as new Part 1608 of Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations its "Guidelines on Affirmative Action Appropriate Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Amended" as set forth below.

Signed at Washington, D.C., this 16th day of January 1979.

For the Commission.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
Chair.

Sec.

AUTHORITY: Sec. 713 of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-12, 78 Stat. 265.

§ 1608.1 Statement of Purpose.

(a) *Need for Guidelines.* Since the passage of Title VII in 1964, many employers, labor organizations, and other persons subject to Title VII have changed their employment practices and systems to improve employment opportunities for minorities and women, and this must continue. These changes have been undertaken either on the initiative of the employer, labor organization, or other person subject to Title VII, or as a result of conciliation efforts under Title VII, action under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, or under other Federal, state, or local laws, or litigation. Many decisions taken pursuant to affirmative action plans or programs have been race, sex, or national origin conscious in order to achieve the Congressional purpose of providing equal employment opportunity. Occasionally, these actions have been challenged as inconsistent with Title VII, because they took into account race, sex, or national origin. This is the so-called "reverse discrimination" claim. In such a situation, both the affirmative action undertaken to improve the conditions of minorities and women, and the objection to that action, are based upon the principles of Title VII. Any uncertainty as to the meaning and application of Title VII in such situations threatens the accomplishment of the clear Congressional intent to encourage voluntary affirmative action. The Commission believes that by the enactment of Title VII Congress did not intend to expose those who comply with the Act to charges that they are violating the very statute they are seeking to implement. Such a result would immobilize or reduce the efforts of many who would otherwise take action to improve the opportunities of minorities and women without litigation, thus frustrating the Congressional intent to encourage voluntary action and increasing the prospect of Title VII litigation. The Commission

[1] The Commission has taken the position that the decision of the Court of Appeals is incorrect and that the affirmative action program there was lawful. The Solicitor General has taken the same position, and the Supreme Court has now granted petitions for a writ of certiorari.

believes that it is now necessary to clarify and harmonize the principles of Title VII in order to achieve these Congressional objectives and protect those employers, labor organizations, and other persons who comply with the principles of Title VII.

(b) *Purposes of Title VII.* Congress enacted Title VII in order to improve the economic and social conditions of minorities and women by providing equality of opportunity in the work place. These conditions were part of a larger pattern of restriction, exclusion, discrimination, segregation, and inferior treatment of minorities and women in many areas of life.[2] The Legislative Histories of Title VII, the Equal Pay Act, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 contain extensive analyses of the higher unemployment rate, the lesser occupational status, and the consequent lower income levels of minorities and women.[3] The purpose of Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, is similar to the purpose of Title VII. In response to these economic and social conditions, Congress, by passage of Title VII, established a national policy against discrimination in employment on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. In addition, Congress strongly encouraged employers, labor organizations, and other persons subject to Title VII (hereinafter referred to as "persons," see section 701(a) of the Act) to act on a voluntary basis to modify employment practices and systems which constituted barriers to equal employment opportunity, without awaiting litigation or formal government action. Conference, conciliation, and persuasion were the primary processes adopted by Congress in 1964, and reaffirmed in 1972, to achieve these objectives, with enforcement action through the courts or agencies as a supporting procedure where voluntary action did not take place and conciliation failed. See § 706 of Title VII.

(c) *Interpretation in furtherance of legislative purpose.* The principle of nondiscrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the principle that each person subject to Title VII should take voluntary action to correct the effects of past discrimination and to prevent present and future discrimination without awaiting litigation, are mutually consistent and interdependent methods of addressing social and economic conditions which precipitated the enactment of Title VII. Voluntary affirmative action to improve opportunities for minorities and women must be encouraged and protected in order to carry out the Congressional intent embodied in Title VII.[4] Affirmative action under these principles means those actions appropriate to overcome the effects of past or present practices, policies, or other barriers to equal employment opportunity. Such voluntary affirmative action cannot be measured by the standard of whether it would have been required had there been litigation, for this standard would undermine the legislative purpose of first encouraging voluntary action without litigation. Rather, persons subject to Title VII must be allowed flexibility in modifying employment systems and practices to comport with the purposes of Title VII. Correspondingly, Title VII must be construed to permit such voluntary action, and those taking such action should be afforded the protection against Title VII liability which the Commission is authorized to provide under section 713(b)(1).

(d) *Guidelines interpret Title VII and authorize use of Section 713(b)(1).* These Guidelines describe the circumstances in which persons subject to Title VII may take or agree upon action to improve employment opportunities of minorities and women, and describe the kinds of actions they may take which are consistent with Title VII. These Guidelines constitute the Commission's interpretation of Title VII and will be applied in the processing of claims of discrimination which involve voluntary affirmative action plans and programs. In addition, these Guidelines state the circumstances under which the Commission will recognize that a person subject to Title VII is entitled to assert that actions were taken "in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance upon a written interpretation or opinion of the Commission," including reliance upon the interpretation and opinion contained in these Guidelines, and thereby invoke the protection of section 713(b)(1) of Title VII.

(e) *Review of existing plans recommended.* Only affirmative action plans or programs adopted in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance upon these Guidelines can receive the full protection of these Guidelines, including the section 713(b)(1) defense. See § 1608.10. Therefore, persons subject to Title VII who have existing affirmative action plans, programs, or agreements are encouraged to review them in light of these Guidelines, to modify them to the extent necessary to comply with these Guidelines, and to readopt or reaffirm them.

§ 1608.2 Written interpretation and opinion.

These Guidelines constitute "a written interpretation and opinion" of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as that term is used in section 713(b)(1) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-12(b)(1), and section 1601.33 of the Procedural Regulations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (29 CFR 1601.30; 42 FR 55,394 (October 14, 1977)). Section 713(b)(1) provides:

> In any action or proceeding based on any alleged unlawful employment practice, no person shall be subject to any liability or punishment for or on account of (1) the commission by such person of an unlawful employment practice if he pleads and proves that the act or omission complained of was in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance on any written interpretation or opinion of the Commission * * *. Such a defense, if established, shall be a bar to the action or proceeding, notwithstanding that * * * after such act or omission, such interpretation or opinion is modified or rescinded or is determined by judicial authority to be invalid or of no legal effect * * *.

The applicability of these Guidelines is subject to the limitations on use set forth in § 1608.11.

§ 1608.3 Circumstances under which voluntary affirmative action is appropriate.

(a) *Adverse effect.* Title VII prohibits practices, procedures, or policies which have an adverse impact unless they are justified by business necessity. In addition, Title VII proscribes practices which "tend to deprive" persons of equal employment opportunities. Employers, labor organizations and other

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[2] Congress has also addressed these conditions in other laws, including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Pub. L. 88-38, 77 Stat. 56 (1963), as amended; the other Titles of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (1964), as amended; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437 (1965), as amended; the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Pub. L. 90-284, Title VII, 82 Stat. 73, 81 (1968), as amended; the Educational Opportunity Act (Title IX), Pub. L. 92-318, 86 Stat. 373 (1972), as amended; and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 972, Pub. L. 92-261, 86 Stat. 103 (1972), as amended.

[3] Equal Pay Act of 1963: S. Rep. No. 176, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., 1-2 (1963). Civil Rights Act of 1964: H.R. Rep. No. 914, pt. 2, 88th Cong., 1st Sess. (1971). Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972: H.R. Rep. No. 92-238, 92d Cong., 1st Sess. (1971); S. Rep. No. 92-415, 92d Cong., 1st Sess. (1971). See also, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Equal Employment Opportunity Report—1975, Job Patterns for Women in Private Industry* (1977); Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Minorities and Women in State and Local Government—1975* (1977); United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women* (1978).

[4] Affirmative action often improves opportunities for all members of the workforce, as where affirmative action includes the posting of notices of job vacancies. Similarly, the integration of previously segregated jobs means that all workers will be provided opportunities to enter jobs previously restricted. See, e.g., *EEOC* v. *AT&T*, 419 F. Supp. 1022 (E.D.Pa. 1976), *aff'd*, 556 F. 2d 167 (3rd Cir. 1977), *cert. denied*, 98 S.Ct. 3145 (1978).

persons subject to Title VII may take affirmative action based on an analysis which reveals facts constituting actual or potential adverse impact, if such adverse impact is likely to result from existing or contemplated practices.

(b) *Effects of prior discriminatory practices.* Employers, labor organizations, or other persons subject to Title VII may also take affirmative action to correct the effects of prior discriminatory practices. The effects of prior discriminatory practices can be initially identified by a comparison between the employer's work force, or a part thereof, and an appropriate segment of the labor force.

(c) *Limited labor pool.* Because of historic restrictions by employers, labor organizations, and others, there are circumstances in which the available pool, particularly of qualified minorities and women, for employment or promotional opportunities is artificially limited. Employers, labor organizations, and other persons subject to Title VII may, and are encouraged to take affirmative action in such circumstances, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Training plans and programs, including on-the-job training, which emphasize providing minorities and women with the opportunity, skill, and expericence necessary to perform the functions of skilled trades, crafts, or professions;

(2) Extensive and focused recruiting activity;

(3) Elimination of the adverse impact caused by unvalidated selection criteria (see sections 3 and 6, Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978), 43 FR 30,290; 38,297; 38,299 (August 25, 1978));

(4) Modification through collective bargaining where a labor organization represents employees, or unilaterally where one does not, of promotion and layoff procedures.

§ 1608.4 Establishing affirmative action plans.

An affirmative action plan or program under this section shall contain three elements: a reasonable self analysis; a reasonable basis for concluding action is appropriate; and reasonable action.

(a) *Reasonable self analysis.* The objective of a self analysis is to determine whether employment practices do, or tend to, exclude, disadvantage, restrict, or result in adverse impact or disparate treatment of previously excluded or restricted groups or leave uncorrected the effects of prior discrimination, and if so, to attempt to determine why. There is no mandatory method of conducting a self analysis. The employer may utilize techniques used in order to comply with Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations, including 41 CFR Part 60-2 (known as Revised Order 4), or related orders issued by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs or its authorized agencies, or may use an analysis similar to that required under other Federal, state, or local laws or regulations prohibiting employment discrimination. In conducting a self analysis, the employer, labor organization, or other person subject to Title VII should be concerned with the effect on its employment practices of circumstances which may be the result of discrimination by other persons or institutions. See *Griggs* v. *Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 (1971).

(b) *Reasonable basis.* If the self analysis shows that one or more employment practices: (1) Have or tend to have an adverse effect on employment opportunities of members of previously excluded groups, or groups whose employment or promotional opportunities have been artificially limited, (2) leave uncorrected the effects of prior discrimination, or (3) result in disparate treatment, the person making the self analysis has a reasonable basis for concluding that action is appropriate. It is not necessary that the self analysis establish a violation of Title VII. This reasonable basis exists without any admission or formal finding that the person has violated Title VII, and without regard to whether there exists arguable defenses to a Title VII action.

(c) *Reasonable action.* The action taken pursuant to an affirmative action plan or program must be reasonable in relation to the problems disclosed by the self analysis. Such reasonable action may include goals and timetables or other appropriate employment tools which recognize the race, sex, or national origin of applicants or employees. It may include the adoption of practices which will eliminate the actual or potential adverse impact, disparate treatment, or effect or past discrimination by providing opportunities for members of groups which have been excluded, regardless of whether the persons benefited were themselves the victims of prior policies or procedures which produced the adverse impact or disparate treatment or which perpetuated past discrimination.

(1) *Illustrations of appropriate affirmative action.* Affirmative action plans or programs may include, but are not limited to, those described in the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinating Council "Policy Statement on Affirmative Action Programs for State and Local Government Agencies," 41 FR 38,814 (September 13, 1976), reaffirmed and extended to all persons subject to Federal equal employment opportunity laws and orders, in the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) 43 FR 38,290; 38,300 (Aug. 25, 1978). That statement reads, in relevant part:

> When an employer has reason to believe that its selection procedures have * * * exclusionary effect * * *, it should initiate affirmative steps to remedy the situation. Such steps, which in design and execution may be race, color, sex or ethnic 'conscious,' include, but are not limited to, the following:
>
> The establishment of a long term goal and short range, interim goals and timetables for the specific job classifications, all of which should take into account the availability of basically qualified persons in the relevant job market;
>
> A recruitment program designed to attract qualified members of the group in question;
>
> A systematic effort to organize work and re-design jobs in ways that provide opportunities for persons lacking 'journeyman' level knowledge or skills to enter and, with appropriate training, to progress in a career field;
>
> Revamping selection instruments or procedures which have not yet been validated in order to reduce or eliminate exclusionary effects on particular groups in particular job classifications;
>
> The initiation of measures designed to assure that members of the affected group who are qualified to perform the job are included within the pool of persons from which the selecting official makes the selection;
>
> A systematic effort to provide career advancement training, both classroom and on-the-job, to employees locked into dead end jobs; and
>
> The establishment of a system for regularly monitoring the effectiveness of the particular affirmative action program, and procedures for making timely adjustments in this program where effectiveness is not demonstrated.

(2) *Standards of reasonable action.* In considering the reasonableness of a particular affirmative action plan or program, the Commission will generally apply the following standards:

(i) The plan should be tailored to solve the problems which were identified in the self analysis, see § 1608.4(a), supra, and to ensure that employment systems operate fairly in the future, while avoiding unnecessary restrictions on opportunities for the workforce as a whole. The race, sex, and national origin conscious provisions of the plan or program should be maintained only so long as is necessary to achieve these objectives.

(ii) Goals and timetables should be reasonably related to such considerations as the effects of past discrimination, the need for prompt elimination of adverse impact or disparate treatment, the availability of basically qualified or qualifiable applicants, and the number of employment opportunities expected to be available.

(d) *Written or unwritten plans or programs—(1) Written plans required for 713(b)(1) Protection.* The protection of section 713(b) of Title VII will

be accorded by the Commission to a person subject to Title VII only if the self analysis and the affirmative action plan are dated and in writing, and the plan otherwise meets the requirements of Section 713(b)(1). The Commission will not require that there be any written statement concluding that a Title VII violation exists.

(2) *Reasonable cause determinations.* Where an affirmative action plan or program is alleged to violate Title VII, or is asserted as a defense to a charge of discrimination, the Commission will investigate the charge in accordance with its usual procedures and pursuant to the standards set forth in these Guidelines, whether or not the analysis and plan are in writing. However, the absence of a written self analysis and a written affirmative action plan or program may make it more difficult to provide credible evidence that the analysis was conducted, and that action was taken pursuant to a plan or program based on the analysis. Therefore, the Commission recommends that such analyses and plans be in writing.

§ 1608.5 Affirmative action compliance programs under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended.

Under Title VII, affirmative action compliance programs adopted pursuant to Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations, including 41 CFR Part 60-2 (Revised Order 4), will be considered by the Commission in light of the similar purposes of Title VII and the Executive Order, and the Commission's responsibility under Executive Order No. 12067 to avoid potential conflict among Federal equal employment opportunity programs. Accordingly, the Commission will process Title VII complaints involving such affirmative action compliance programs under this section.

(a) *Procedures for review of Affirmative Action Compliance Programs.* If adherence to an affirmative action compliance program adopted pursuant to Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations, is the basis of a complaint filed under Title VII, or is alleged to be the justification for an action which is challenged under Title VII, the Commission will investigate to determine: (1) Whether the affirmative action compliance program was adopted by a person subject to the Order and pursuant to the Order, and (2) whether adherence to the program was the basis of the complaint or the justification.

(1) *Programs previously approved.* If the Commission makes the determination described in paragraph (a) of this section and also finds that the affirmative action program has been approved by an appropriate official of the Department of Labor or its authorized agencies, or is part of a conciliation or settlement agreement or an order of an administrative agency, whether entered by consent or after contested proceedings brought to enforce Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, the Commission will issue a determination of no reasonable cause.

(2) *Program not previously approved.* If the Commission makes the determination described in paragraph (a), of this section but the program has not been approved by an appropriate official of the Department of Labor or its authorized agencies, the Commission will: (i) Follow the procedure in § 1608.10(a) and review the program, or (ii) refer the plan to the Department of Labor for a determination of whether it is to be approved under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, and its implementing regulations. If, the Commission finds that the program does conform to these Guidelines, or the Department of Labor approves the affirmative action compliance program, the Commission will issue a determination of no reasonable cause under § 1608.10(a).

(b) *Reliance on these guidelines.* In addition, if the affirmative action compliance program has been adopted in good faith reliance on these Guidelines, the provisions of section 713(b)(1) of Title VII and of § 1608.10(b), below, may be asserted by the contractor.

§ 1608.6 Affirmative action plans which are part of Commission conciliation or settlement agreements.

(a) *Procedures for review of plans.* If adherence to a conciliation or settlement agreement executed under Title VII and approved by a responsible official of the EEOC is the basis of a complaint filed under Title VII, or is alleged to be the justification for an action challenged under Title VII, the Commission will investigate to determine: (1) Whether the conciliation agreement or settlement agreement was approved by a responsible official of the EEOC, and (2) whether adherence to the agreement was the basis for the complaint or justification. If the Commission so finds, it will make a determination of no reasonable cause under § 1608.10(a) and will advise the respondent of its right under section 713(b)(1) of Title VII to rely on the conciliation agreement.

(b) *Reliance on these guidelines.* In addition, if the affirmative action plan or program has been adopted in good faith reliance on these Guidelines, the provisions of section 713(b)(1) of Title VII and of § 1608.10(b), below, may be asserted by the respondent.

§ 1608.7 Affirmative action plans or programs under State or local law.

Affirmative action plans or programs executed by agreement with state or local government agencies, or by order of state or local government agencies, whether entered by consent or after contested proceedings, under statutes or ordinances described in Title VII, will be reviewed by the Commission in light of the similar purposes of Title VII and such statutes and ordinances. Accordingly, the Commission will process Title VII complaints involving such affirmative action plans or programs under this section.

(a) *Procedures for review of plans or programs.* If adherence to an affirmative action plan or program executed pursuant to a state statute or local ordinance described in Title VII is the basis of a complaint filed under Title VII or is alleged to be the justification for an action which is challenged under Title VII, the Commission will investigate to determine: (1) Whether the affirmative action plan or program was executed by an employer, labor organization, or person subject to the statute or ordinance, (2) whether the agreement was approved by an appropriate official of the state or local government, and (3) whether adherence to the plan or program was the basis of the complaint or justification.

(1) *Previously Approved Plans or Programs.* If the Commission finds the facts described in paragraph (a) of this section, the Commission will, in accordance with the "substantial weight" provisions of section 706 of the Act, find no reasonable cause where appropriate.

(2) *Plans or Programs not previously approved.* If the plan or program has not been approved by an appropriate official of the state or local government, the Commission will follow the procedure of § 1608.10 of these Guidelines. If the Commission finds that the plan or program does conform to these Guidelines, the Commission will make a determination of no reasonable cause as set forth in § 1608.10(a).

(b) *Reliance on these guidelines.* In addition, if the affirmative action plan or program has been adopted in good faith reliance on these Guidelines, the provisions of section 713(b)(1) and § 1608.10(b), below, may be asserted by the respondent.

§ 1608.8 Adherence to court order.

Parties are entitled to rely on orders of courts of competent jurisdiction. If adherence to an Order of a United States District Court or other court of competent jurisdiction, whether entered by consent or after contested litigation, in a case brought to enforce a Federal, state, or local equal employment opportunity law or regulation, is

the basis of a complaint filed under Title VII or is alleged to be the justification for an action which is challenged under Title VII, the Commission will investigate to determine: (a) Whether such an Order exists and (b) whether adherence to the affirmative action plan which is part of the Order was the basis of the complaint or justification. If the Commission so finds, it will issue a determination of no reasonable cause. The Commission interprets Title VII to mean that actions taken pursuant to the direction of a Court Order cannot give rise to liability under Title VII.

§ 1608.9 Reliance on directions of other government agencies.

When a charge challenges an affirmative action plan or program, or when such a plan or program is raised as justification for an employment decision, and when the plan or program was developed pursuant to the requirements of a Federal or state law or regulation which in part seeks to ensure equal employment opportunity, the Commission will process the charge in accordance with § 1608.10(a). Other agencies with equal employment opportunity responsibilities may apply the principles of these Guidelines in the exercise of their authority.

§ 1608.10 Standard of review.

(a) *Affirmative action plans or programs not specifically relying on these guidelines.* If, during the investigation of a charge of discrimination filed with the Commission, a respondent asserts that the action complained of was taken pursuant to an in accordance with a plan or program of the type described in these Guidelines, the Commission will determine whether the assertion is true, and if so, whether such a plan or program conforms to the requirements of these guidelines. If the Commission so finds, it will issue a determination of no reasonable cause and, where appropriate, will state that the determination constitutes a written interpretation or opinion of the Commission under section 713(b)(1). This interpretation may be relied upon by the respondent and asserted as a defense in the event that new charges involving similar facts and circumstances are thereafter filed against the respondent, which are based on actions taken pursuant to the affirmative action plan or program. If the Commission does not so find, it will proceed with the investigation in the usual manner.

(b) *Reliance on these guidelines.* If a respondent asserts that the action taken was pursuant to and in accordance with a plan or program which was adopted or implemented in good faith, in conformity with, and in reliance upon these Guidelines, and the self analysis and plan are in writing, the Commission will determine whether such assertion is true. If the Commission so finds, it will so state in the determination of no reasonable cause and will advise the respondent that:

(1) The Commission has found that the respondent is entitled to the protection of section 713(b)(1) of Title VII; and

(2) That the determination is itself an additional written interpretation or opinion of the Commission pursuant to section 713(b)(1).

§ 1608.11 Limitations on the application of these guidelines.

(a) *No determination of adequacy of plan or program.* These Guidelines are applicable only with respect to the circumstances described in § 1608.1(d), above. They do not apply to, and the section 713(b)(1) defense is not available for the purpose of, determining the adequacy of an affirmative action plan or program to eliminate discrimination. Whether an employer who takes such affirmative action has done enough to remedy such discrimination will remain a question of fact in each case.

(b) *Guidelines inapplicable in absence of affirmative action.* Where an affirmative action plan or program does not exist, or where the plan or program is not the basis of the action complained of, these Guidelines are inapplicable.

(c) *Currency of plan or program.* Under section 713(b)(1), persons may rely on the plan or program only during the time when it is current. Currency is related to such factors as progress in correcting the conditions disclosed by the self analysis. The currency of the plan or program is a question of fact to be determined on a case by case basis. Programs developed under Executive Order No. 11246, as amended, will be deemed current in accordance with Department of Labor regulations at 41 CFR Chapter 60, or successor orders or regulations.

§ 1608.12 Equal employment opportunity plans adopted pursuant to section 717 of Title VII.

If adherence to an Equal Employment Opportunity Plan, adopted pursuant to Section 717 of Title VII, and approved by an appropriate official of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, is the basis of a complaint filed under Title VII, or is alleged to be the justification for an action under Title VII, these Guidelines will apply in a manner similar to that set forth in § 1608.5. The Commission will issue regulations setting forth the procedure for processing such complaints.

[FR Doc. 79-2025 Filed 1-18-79; 8:45 am]

[6570-06-M]

PART 1601—PROCEDURAL REGULATIONS

Issuance of Interpretation and Opinion

AGENCY: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Commission is today publishing in final form a set of Guidelines on Affirmative Action (44 FR 4422), to encourage voluntary action to eliminate employment discrimination. Section 1601.33 of the Commission's regulations is being amended to reflect a new method, contemplated by these Guidelines, by which the Commission may issue an "interpretation of opinion" of the Commission within the meaning of Section 713 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 20, 1979.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Peter C. Robertson, Director, Office of Policy Implementation, 2401 E Street, NW., Room 4002A, Washington, D.C. 20506 (202) 254-7639.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Commission's new Guidelines on Affirmative Action contemplate that in instances where a charge of discrimination has been filed and the Commission finds that the treatment complained of occurred as a result of affirmative action procedures consistent with its Guidelines on Affirmative Action, the Commission will issue a determination of no reasonable cause. This determination may contain language stating that it is "a written interpretation or opinion of the Commission" within the meaning of Section 713(b)(1) of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. The respondent in such a case may rely upon this determination as a defense to any subsequent complaints of discrimination which involve similar facts and circumstances, if the subsequent actions complained of were also taken by the respondent under its affirmative action procedures.

Such language will also appear in no-cause determinations whenever the Commission finds that the action complained of occurred pursuant to an affirmative action plan adopted in good faith compliance with, and reliance

upon, the Commission's Guidelines on affirmative Action.

The Commission's procedural regulations are accordingly revised to include this specific type of no-cause finding as a type of "written interpretation or opinion of the Commission."

Signed at Washington, D.C. this 16th day of January 1979.

For the Commission.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
Chair.

Therefore, 29 CFR 1601.33 is amended to read as follows:

§ 1601.33 Issuance of interpretation or opinion.

Only the following may be relied upon as a "written interpretation or opinion of the Commission" within the meaning of Section 713 of Title VII:

(a) A letter entitled "opinion letter" and signed by the General Counsel on behalf of the Commission, or

(b) Matter published and specifically designated as such in the FEDERAL REGISTER, including the Commission's Guidelines on Affirmative Action, or

(c) A Commission determination of no reasonable cause, issued under the circumstances described in § 1608.10 (a) or (b) of the Commission's Guidelines on Affirmative Action 29 CFR Part 1608, when such determination contains a statement that it is a "written interpretation or opinion of the Commission."

[FR Doc. 79-2026 Filed 1-18-79; 8:45 am]