

THE DAILY RECORD

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2006 ♦ NUMBER 91

16 PAGES • 1 SECTION

\$1.00 **AD** **POSTAL SERVICE**

Highland/Strong To Pay \$200K To Hispanic Employees

EEOC Says Employer Had No Justification For Restrictive Language Policy

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) announced the settlement of a national origin discrimination lawsuit under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act against Highland Hospital and Strong Health for \$200,000 and other relief.

The lawsuit was brought on behalf of a class of Hispanic employees from the housekeeping department who were subjected to English-only rules without any business justifica-

tion by the employer.

The complaint asserted that Highland Hospital knowingly hired employees with limited English skills and then prohibited them from speaking Spanish and required that they speak only English in the workplace at all times. One manager reportedly said, "This is America, speak English" — making clear that there was no business justification in the housekeeping department for an English-only rule.

In addition to the monetary payments, the settlement calls for a three-year prohibition from implementing English-only policies. Highland Hospital has also agreed to adopt an anti-discrimination policy and complaint procedure and to train its managers and supervisors regularly on national origin discrimination and other unlawful discriminatory practices.

"EEOC commends the five charging parties for their courage in bringing this mat-

ter to our attention," said EEOC Senior Trial Attorney Sunu P. Chandy. "Cases involving language issues, accent discrimination, and restrictive language policies or practices are EEOC priorities."

The agency's New York District Director Spencer H. Lewis, Jr. added, "Employers must heighten their awareness to discriminatory language policies and practices, especially as the 21st century workforce is increasingly comprised of multi-lingual individuals."