**EEOC Says U.S. Air Force**

**Must Accommodate Deaf**

Since 2020, Disability Rights Advocates and the Law Offices of Wendy Musell have represented a group of deaf civilian employees, applicants and former employees in an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) case against the United States Air Force.

Despite its $190 billion annual budget, the Air Force has consistently failed to provide deaf employees and applicants with American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, videophones, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services and other basic accommodations.

The EEOC appeals court, the Office of Federal Operations, has affirmed the Oct. 13, 2022, EEOC decision certifying a nationwide class of deaf civilian employees and applicants, appointing our five clients as “class agents,” and appointing Disability Rights Advocates and Musell as class counsel. There are more than 700 deaf civilian employees and applicants nationwide at each Air Force military base who have experienced similar discrimination.

Sean Betouliere of Disability Rights Advocates and Musell applaud the decision. “Our clients and the other deaf civilians they represent are hard-working and incredibly capable people, and all they have asked for are the basic accommodations they need to do their jobs.”

Class Agent Sarah Weimer, who served as the labor and employment attorney at Nellis Air Force base, sees this class certification decision as a major step toward her goal of ending discrimination against the Air Force’s deaf and hard-of-hearing applicants and employees. “One of my main roles while at Nellis AFB was to advise the Air Force on its legal obligation to accommodate employees with disabilities, and at the same time I was being denied the basic accommodations I needed to do my own job.

The Air Force repeatedly failed to provide me with ASL interpreters or CART services, and I went almost a year without a working videophone, meaning that I could not even make or receive phone calls.”