

THE UNITED STATES
COMMISSION ON
CIVIL RIGHTS
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NEWS RELEASE

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CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION URGES ADMINISTRATION TO SUPPORT MINORITY SCHOLARSHIPS

WASHINGTON, D.C.---The United States Commission on Civil Rights urged President Bush to "take a strong stand in support of affirmative action in the recruitment of minority students, including the use of minority-targeted scholarships where necessary."

During a telephonic meeting conducted on January 23, 1991, the Commission voted 5-2-1 in favor of sending a letter to the President expressing concern about the minority scholarships policy announced last month by the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). In the letter, the Commissioners pointed out that minority scholarships "achieve either of two important national interests -- remedying the invidious effects of discrimination and attaining the benefits of a diverse student body."

In disagreeing with the OCR's announcement that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits the funding of minority-targeted scholarships by institutions receiving federal financial assistance, the Commission expressed the opinion that the law permits educational institutions "to make reasonable use of minority-targeted scholarships when necessary to overcome the effects of discrimination or to achieve the legitimate and important goal of a culturally diverse student body."

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Commission Chairman Arthur A. Fletcher, Vice Chairman Charles Pei Wang and Commissioners Mary Frances Berry, Esther G.A. Buckley, and Russell G. Redenbaugh voted in favor of expressing concern to the President. Voting against the motion were Commissioners William B. Allen and Carl A. Anderson. Commissioner Blandina Cardenas Ramirez abstained from voting to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest. (Ramirez is the director of the Office of Minority Concerns for the American Council on Education.)

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan, fact-finding agency concerned with discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap and national origin. Wilfredo J. Gonzalez is staff director.