

Bush Watch

Civil and Human Rights

Since taking office in 2001, President Bush has launched frontal attacks on the civil rights and anti-discrimination laws that have protected people of color, people with disabilities and women; he also has shortchanged the effort to fight HIV/AIDS. The administration has weakened civil rights enforcement by appointing outspoken opponents of civil rights and workers' rights to key civil rights enforcement positions, sometimes bypassing the Senate, which is charged with approving federal judicial appointees. The administration also has supported efforts to eliminate affirmative action and to reduce the political power of people of color by refusing to allow the 2000 U.S. Census to correct their undercount.

Circumvented Senate to Appoint Extremist Judges

Bush twice has bypassed the Senate to appoint extremist judges to the federal courts. In February 2004, Bush made a recess appointment to avoid a Senate confirmation vote and placed ultraconservative William Pryor Jr. on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. Pryor was twice unable to win Senate confirmation because of his extremist views on civil rights and the rights of workers, women and people with disabilities. One month earlier, Bush made a recess appointment to place Charles Pickering on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit. Pickering was opposed by a broad coalition because of his controversial and negative record on civil rights and other issues.

Backed Suit to End Affirmative Action

The Bush administration filed a legal brief in January 2003 supporting a suit before the U.S. Supreme Court that challenged the affirmative action policies of the University of Michigan. The High Court ultimately ruled in support of the university's affirmative action policies. Many universities use similar policies to help shape a diverse student body by considering various factors in the admissions process such as grades and test scores, an applicant's race, national origin, gender, geography, athletic ability, special talents and whether an applicant is a child of an alumnus. Bush, an admitted C average student, won admission to Yale University, where both his father and grandfather were graduates.

Proposed Temporary Work, Not Citizenship, for Immigrants

President Bush in January 2004 proposed a new temporary worker program that would match immigrant workers with a U.S. employer if no U.S. worker is available or willing to take a job. The program also would grant temporary worker status to undocumented workers but would require temporary workers to return to their home country after their work is finished. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-Texas), chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, described Bush's plan as a "21st-century bracero program," a modern day equivalent of the 1940s bracero program that tore families apart and took away the earnings of laborers. "The president's program would create a generation of second-class citizens who are baited to work for America with the false promise of ever being able to enjoy the benefits of citizenship."

Refused to Adjust Census to Correct Undercount

The Bush administration refused to adjust the 2000 U.S. Census that left an estimated 3 million people uncounted. The census figures are used to redraw



congressional districts every 10 years. According to the census, those uncounted were primarily minorities, children and the poor. Civil rights groups, unions and congressional Democrats supported an adjustment of the figures to guarantee fair electoral representation.

Shortchanged Funds to Fight Global HIV/AIDS

The administration's widely publicized initiative to combat the international HIV/AIDS pandemic, announced in Bush's State of the Union speech in January 2003, did not meet its promise of tripling U.S. assistance to \$15 billion. Instead, the administration's fiscal 2004 budget for this initiative barely provided double spending levels, increasing spending from a little more than \$1 billion to \$2 billion. Very little of the new money was channeled through the United Nation's Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, which coordinates new AIDS spending among various donor countries.

Sought to Shut Down Labor's Women's Bureau

Less than two days after assuming office, Bush tried to eliminate all regional offices of the Department of Labor Women's Bureau. This followed elimination of the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach and the Equal Pay Matters Initiative office. The regional offices inform women about training programs and provide other services. After intense



criticism from women's organization, civil rights groups, unions and others, the administration withdrew the proposal to close the offices.

Considered Limits on Female Athletic Scholarships

A federal commission in 2003 considered allowing colleges and universities to limit the number of scholarships they award to female athletes. The Secretary's Commission on Opportunity in Athletics, part of the Bush administration's federal Education Department, reviewed Title IX, the 30-year-old law that bans sex discrimination in college-level sports. The law is credited widely with increasing young women's participation in sports. According to an investigation by *The Washington Post*, published Jan. 24, 2003, the proposal would have allowed schools to devote as little as 43 percent of their athletic scholarships to women—even though women make up 55 percent of students enrolled at four-year colleges.



“As a Latinio living in a very small town where the unemployment rate is 12 percent. The majority of people in my town are Latino, and the language barrier hurts them when looking for employment. In this job market, one can't have anything working against them.”

—Francisco Brea Lawrence, Mass.

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