



May 13, 2003

Equality of Opportunity for All Americans

Introduction

It was Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President of the United States, who freed African Americans from the bonds of slavery during the Civil War. Since the election of Lincoln, the Republican Party has been committed to achieving and maintaining a form of government “whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men; to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life.” In other words, to provide equality of opportunity for all. This paper will outline a number of core Republican agenda items that reaffirm our party’s commitment to all Americans, but in particular to African Americans, a disproportionate number of whom have yet to fulfill the American dream.

Republicans have a long and solid history of fighting for equality of opportunity for Americans of every color and creed: Republican platforms in the 1950s and 1960s supported civil and voting rights, and Republican votes in the Senate helped civil and voting rights legislation of the 1960s to become law – often over the strong objection of southern Democrats. However, Republicans were not nearly as vocal in pressing for civil rights, and Democrats capitalized on Republicans’ missed opportunities. Since then, the perception has been that the Democratic Party is the party for minorities, but things might be changing. A recent commentary published in *The Wall Street Journal* summarizes this nascent transformation: “Someone once remarked that a man with a reputation as an early riser can sleep till noon. Stalwart behavior during the civil rights revolution 40 years ago has made Democrats the default party for minorities. This, despite the fact that the left has been virtually asleep on the job for several decades.”¹

Republicans are proud of their agenda, believing that it compassionately addresses the concerns of Americans, regardless of race. However, the measure of compassion should not be how many needy people receive government aid, but how many people no longer need government assistance. We know that the free market creating more and better-paying jobs uplifts workers more than paternalistic government programs. And so, for the 21st century, we have a better plan of targeted tax incentives to rejuvenate communities in vital need of a hand up, not a hand-out. We also know that a good job starts with a good education. We applaud our

President for promoting education reform, and we vow not to abandon minority children to a school system that has failed them.

And we are confident that, as more and more Americans of all races and ethnic backgrounds make their way up the ladder of opportunity (many helped by Republican-inspired welfare reform), they will find that the Republican Party has much to offer.

Education and School Choice

When President Bush described reading as “the new civil right,” he restated what has been Republican policy for some time: many of the most intractable disparities between African Americans and whites in education result not from acts of racial discrimination, but from the failure of schools serving minority populations to give these students a good education in a safe learning environment.

Recent results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests illustrate what the President has called “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” The 2000 NAEP results showed that 40 percent of white fourth graders scored at or above the proficient reading level, compared to only 12 percent of their African American peers. Meanwhile, 37 percent of white fourth graders scored at the below-basic level in reading – a score that essentially equates to illiteracy – whereas 63 percent of black fourth-graders tested at this level.

Similarly, in math, African American performance also lagged: 35 percent of white fourth graders scored at or above proficient, and just 5 percent of African Americans scored as well. Likewise, the national average for African American eighth graders who achieve passing math scores stands at 6 percent compared with 40 percent for white students.

Republicans’ efforts to address racial inequities in public elementary and secondary schools were especially evident during congressional debate on the No Child Left Behind Act. Republican members were determined to make sure this landmark law would no longer permit school officials to conceal disappointing results for minority students. Now, the law for measuring academic progress in federally aided schools requires that the data be disaggregated for students by poverty level, race, ethnicity, disability status, and English proficiency level to ensure that no child – regardless of his or her background – is left behind.

In addition to supporting a greater investment in education by the federal government, Congressional Republicans have pressed for choice and competition, especially in schools serving poor and minority students. For example, during the 105th Congress, Senate Republicans passed a plan to provide “opportunity scholarships” to students in failing schools in the District of Columbia; after unanimously passing the Senate, the bill was sent to the House. Republicans fought hard to pass the bill against heavy opposition by House Democrats (208 Republicans

voted for and 198 Democrats against), but the bill was ultimately vetoed by President Clinton. The District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1998, originally sponsored by Senator Dan Coats (R-IN), which passed the House 214-206, would have appropriated \$7 million in public funds to finance vouchers for 2,000 D.C. public school students in 1998.²

Yet such policies have broad support among African Americans:

- Seventy-two percent of African Americans would support an initiative to allow the tax dollars allotted for their children's education to be used for private or public school tuition. Most white respondents (62 percent) would support it, too. (Zogby, 7/02)
- Seventy-five percent of African Americans support allowing parents to send their child to "a school of their choice." (Zogby, 7/02)
- Sixty percent of African Americans gave their public schools a "C" grade. (Public Opinion Strategies, 3/01)

Data continues to confirm that minority students need better choices, yet the Democrats opposed, and President Clinton vetoed, The District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1998, one of the most significant attempts to provide a solution. Public schools in the District of Columbia continue to perform abysmally. One recent study finds that private school students in D.C. average 1200 on the SAT while D.C. public school students' average is 798, a score which is more than 200 points below the national average.³

But things might be changing. There are signs that elected officials and local school board members who traditionally have opposed school choice initiatives are changing their position. On May 1 of this year, the Democratic mayor of Washington, D.C., Anthony Williams, came out in strong support of school vouchers, remarking, "We will find that our regular public schools will end up in better shape."⁴ The Mayor's shift to align himself with President Bush's D.C. scholarship initiative follows on the heels of another recent high-profile vocalization of support for vouchers. The President of the Board of Education for the District of Columbia, Peggy Cooper Cafritz, has also voiced support for school vouchers. This level of support is important for Congress to witness as it considers a \$7 million school choice funding package that would specifically allow underprivileged D.C. parents to send their children to private schools.

More important, though, parents of public school students in the District of Columbia are aware of the inequities mentioned earlier, and statistics show they are willing to take matters into their own hands.

Sixty-three percent of D.C. residents polled in 2002 favor vouchers.⁵ And given the opportunity, an overwhelming number of D.C. parents and students would use them. In 1997,

1,000 partial tuition scholarships were offered to needy families in the District and nearly 10,000 applications were received.⁶ In 1999, 1.25 million applications were received for 40,000 scholarships in a national lottery.⁷ Clearly, students stuck in failing schools are eagerly searching for a way out. The No Child Left Behind Act gives them one by allowing students in poorly rated public schools to transfer to a different public school. Seventeen percent of all public school students in the country are African American,⁸ and they will benefit from continued support of the education reforms Republicans have enacted.

Higher Education

The Bush Administration is also leading the charge to help African Americans and members of other minorities attend college. The Administration increased funding for the Pell grant program and other post-secondary school initiatives. On January 19, 2003, President Bush announced his plans to increase funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

- The President's FY04 budget proposal includes a 5-percent across-the-board increase in funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGI), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI). This amounts to a \$277 million increase in funding for HBCUs and HBGIs alone, and an overall increase of \$371 million.
- The proposal provides increased funding through grants to 99 institutions under the HBCU program and to 18 graduate institutions eligible under the HBGI program.
- For HSIs, the Bush proposal increases funding for competitive grants to institutions whose student population is 25 percent Hispanic (50 percent of those students must be considered low-income individuals for the institution to be eligible under the HSI program).⁹
- The Republican-led Senate recently passed by unanimous consent S. 196, the Digital and Wireless Network Technology Program Act of 2003, sponsored by Republican Senators, that provides up to \$250 million each year, for fiscal years 2004 through 2008, to help HBCUs and HSIs acquire the digital and wireless computer and network technology and equipment necessary to install high-speed Internet access and to provide financial aid to their students who cannot afford personal computing equipment.

Pell Grants

Pell grants are widely considered to be the most effective and well-targeted of federal assistance to help all Americans who desire a college education but cannot afford the price tag. Of the more than 40 percent of our nation's high school graduates not enrolled in post-secondary education, more than half come from low-income and minority families, and matriculation rates for African American students trail white students by almost 10 percent.¹⁰ The rising cost of higher education denies children in hardworking families access to crucial educational opportunities.

The record shows Republicans are doing a better job than Democrats in funding the Pell grant program to help ameliorate this problem. The maximum grant amount has increased every year since Republicans took control of the House and Senate in 1994. In contrast, in seven of the eleven years before that, the maximum Pell grant did not increase at all (1983-1994).¹¹ In 1993, the previous administration was responsible for cutting the maximum Pell grant to students by \$100, the largest cut in the program's 30-year history and the only decrease of the last 20 years. Since taking office, President Bush has urged \$3.3 billion more for the Pell grant program – the largest increases proposed by any President.¹²

Such unprecedented Republican-led increases will empower young minorities to secure better paying jobs and increase the standard of living for themselves and their families.

- Thirty-three percent of the 3.8 million students who receive Pell grants annually are minorities. African American recipients account for 37 percent of that group, or 12.2 percent of the total number of students receiving aid. (NCES 1999-2000 academic year statistics) (Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance for 2001)
- Over 2.5 million minority students have received Pell grants since President Bush was elected (academic years from 2000-2002).
- Since President Bush was elected, the maximum Pell grant has been increased from \$3,300 to \$4,050, an increase of almost 25 percent. Appropriations for Pell grant funding in the 2003-2004 academic year total \$11.8 billion (an \$866 million increase over FY02), and the maximum single grant cap of \$4,050 is the highest in this program's history.
- President Bush's FY04 budget proposes a \$1.9 billion increase in Pell grant funding, which would put the total for the program at an all time high of \$12.7 billion. This would enable almost 4.9 million students to receive a Pell grant.

Social Security

The current Social Security system discriminates against African Americans because of their average lower life expectancy and earlier entry into the job market. Payments into and disbursements from Social Security result in an estimated \$10,000 per-person net lifetime transfer of wealth from blacks to whites.¹³ Republican proposals to allow workers to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in personal accounts would help correct this problem. Americans, then, would not lose their Social Security benefits and could pass them on to their loved ones. [See RPC paper entitled “A Nation of Owners and Savers,” May 1, 2003, for an extended discussion of this issue.]

The National Center for Health Statistics says that African American males born in 1992 have an average life expectancy of 65 years, in contrast to a 73.9-year life expectancy for white males born that same year. African American females born in 1992 have a 73.9-year life expectancy, while white women can expect to live to almost 80. This large life expectancy gap prompts a question: “Given that the retirement age will increase to 67 by the year 2027, is it fair to expect young black men to support a scheme that will not provide them with pension benefits until two years after they can expect to die?”¹⁴

Another contributing factor is that African Americans generally enter the job market and start paying into Social Security at an earlier age than their white counterparts. However, because Social Security only pays benefits based on a recipient’s highest grossing 35 years in the job market, African Americans may end up paying FICA taxes for more years than whites but could receive fewer benefits upon retirement.

As a result of the relative income disparity between African Americans and whites, African Americans are left with less income to spend than whites after Social Security taxes. So, a Social Security system that allows beneficiaries to spend a part of their Social Security FICA payment on equity investments would help African Americans proportionally more than whites, who may have more investment income.

For instance, a recent study by Edward N. Wolff suggests that if African American households had the same portfolio composition as had white households between 1984 and 1994, the wealth gap between the two groups would have been narrowed by six to eight percentage points.¹⁵ Moreover, Wolff reaffirms the belief that “periods of asset price increases pushes[sic] up the overall rate on capital for whites relative to African Americans because of the greater weight of stocks in the former group’s portfolio.”¹⁶

Deroy Murdock, president of Loud & Clear Communications and a member of the Black American leadership group Project 21, offered this insight: “Replacing the current socialist system with an endowment mentality would help bring a sense of promise to many black Americans whose communities have been undermined by an entitlement mentality that

discourages work, sacrifice and long-term thinking. It would also present them with the possibility of reaping the benefits of their hard work and investments. A new system of individually owned, privately controlled retirement accounts will improve the lives of all working Americans, especially Social Security's unintended black victims."¹⁷ Republicans have made the realization of these accounts a part of their agenda for the future.

Repealing the Death Tax

Republican efforts to eliminate the death tax will greatly benefit the large number of minority-owned small businesses that are harmed by this tax: As the number of small businesses owned by African Americans grows, the damaging effects of the death tax on small businesses will also grow. Many prominent African American business leaders are calling for an end to the death tax.

For example, Harry C. Alford, president and CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, had this to say about the benefits of eliminating this onerous tax: "The total net worth of African Americans is only 1.2 percent of the total net worth of the nation. Getting rid of the 'Death Tax' will start to create a needed legacy and begin a cycle of wealth building for blacks in this country. Eliminating the 'Death Tax' will be a great start."¹⁸

- Those with lower incomes are more likely to view the death tax as unfair. Fully 65 percent of those with incomes below \$30,000 believe the death tax is unfair. By comparison, only 59 percent of individuals with incomes above \$60,000 label the death tax unfair. (Luntz Research Companies, January 27, 2003)

Other prominent business leaders who advocate repeal of the death tax are: George Herrera, president and CEO of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Pete Homer, president and CEO of the National Indian Business Association; and Terry Neese, CEO and founder of Terry Neese Personnel Services on behalf of the National Association of Women Business Owners.

Bush Cabinet and Confirmation of Nominees

Republicans can be proud that President Bush has sought out qualified minority nominees for judicial vacancies, cabinet posts, and other key positions throughout his administration. He nominated the first African American jurist ever to serve on the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals,¹⁹ and has nominated many other African Americans and other members of minorities to district and circuit court posts. Additionally, this Republican administration has been well served by Colin Powell as Secretary of State, Rod Paige as Secretary of Education, and Condoleezza Rice as National Security Advisor. President Bush recently named another

prominent African American, Clark Ervin, to serve as Inspector General in the new Department of Homeland Security.

Walter Williams, a distinguished African American professor of economics at George Mason University, wrote that President Bush's appointments "demonstrate a respect conservatives have for blacks that's often absent among liberals. Powell and Rice have their jobs in the administration not as tokens, but because Bush sees them as among the best Americans for the jobs. Regardless of whether black people agree or disagree with President Bush's policies..., we should take pride in his appointments of Powell and Rice."²⁰ In a recent survey of 1,000 African American registered voters (80 percent of whom identified themselves as Democrats), 80 percent identified Colin Powell as the highest-ranking political figure in the nation. Also according to this survey, Condoleezza Rice's popularity among African Americans increased over the last year by almost 25 percent.²¹

Since taking office, President Bush has appointed record levels of African Americans to high-ranking positions in the federal government.²² An influential African American, the Reverend Kirbyjon Caldwell, pastor of Houston's Windsor Village United Methodist Church, was so impressed by the level of African American involvement in the Bush administration – and insulted by the blatant lack thereof on the Al Gore campaign team – that he abandoned his lifelong Democratic roots to become a vocal supporter and spiritual advisor to President Bush.²³

Now that George W. Bush has been in office for three years, how does his administration compare to the previous one, which was called by the *Washington Post* the most racially and ethnically diverse administration ever? Like President Clinton, President Bush has consciously assembled an ethnically diverse cabinet. The *Washington Post* reports that 25 percent of Bush's appointees are minorities. A Brookings Institute Presidential Appointee Initiative study done at the end of President Bush's first year in office found his administration's "hiring patterns are similar [to President Clinton's] in terms of race and ethnic diversity: 14 percent of Clinton's folks were African American, 6 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian. The Bush team is 9 percent African American, 8 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian."²⁴ Since that study was published, President Bush has nominated a number of additional African Americans, like Clark Kent Ervin, to top-level positions within the Administration.

What few in the press acknowledge about President Clinton is that, while he aimed for ethnic diversity, he tended not to appoint African Americans to top policy positions. As Clinton Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said, the upper reaches of the Clinton administration were a "white boys club." President Bush, on the other hand, has far surpassed Clinton when it comes to appointing blacks to major policy posts. According to a recent White House release, minorities have filled 45 percent of this administration's highest policy positions.²⁵

President Bush has appointed a host of African Americans to serve at the deputy and assistant secretary levels, where they collectively manage over \$300 billion in federal spending.

Short biographies of these “chief operating officers” in our government reveal that they have solid job qualifications:²⁶

- Larry D. Thompson – Title: Deputy Attorney General (No. 2 in the Justice Department); a former U.S. District Attorney in Georgia under President Ronald Reagan and a partner in the Atlanta-based law firm King and Spaulding.
- Alphonso R. Jackson – Title: Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; a former president of American Electric Power – Texas, a former president and CEO of the Housing Authority of the City of Dallas, and long-time policy maker in the public housing arena in his native Washington, D.C.
- Claude Allen – Title: Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services; a former Secretary of the Virginia Department of Health and Human Services and associate at Baker & Botts in Washington, D.C.
- Leo Mackay – Title: Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs; a former Vice President of Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc., and Bell-Augusta Product Support. He is a former officer in the U.S. Navy, where he was Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. He holds a masters degree from the Kennedy School of Government and a Ph.D. from Harvard.
- Ralph F. Boyd Jr. – Title: Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights; a former federal prosecutor for the U.S. Attorney’s office in Boston, he holds a J.D. from Harvard.
- Charles A. James – Title: Assistant Attorney General, Antitrust; in the past he has served as acting assistant attorney general and deputy assistant attorney general and is a partner with the Cleveland-based law firm of Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue.
- Jerry Reynolds – Title: Assistant Secretary of Education, Civil Rights; a former Senior Regulatory Counsel for Kansas Power & Light Co., President and legal counsel for the Center for New Black Leadership, and Legal Analyst for the Center for Equal Opportunity.
- Vernon B. Parker – Title: Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Civil Rights (nominated); most recently a senior pastor at his church, he is also a former president and CEO of the international nutritional supplement company, BelSante International LLC. Previous government service includes an appointment as Special Assistant to the President in 1992-93.
- Albert Hawkins – Title: Assistant to the President, Secretary of Cabinet Affairs; a former director of the Office of Budget and Planning for Texas, he also served as then-Governor

Bush's chief advisor on state and local fiscal issues, and then later as a deputy manager overseeing financial planning and budget management for the Bush presidential campaign.

- Kay Coles James – Title: White House Director of the Office of Personnel Management; a former senior fellow and Director of the Citizenship Project at the Heritage Foundation, a past Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Services, and a prior Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

And there are many other African Americans serving in key roles in the administration, such as: Melvin Clark, Director of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation; Eligah Clark, Chairman of the Board of Veteran's Appeals; Anthony Lowe, the Federal Insurance Administrator for the Emergency Management Agency; Sharee Freeman, Director of the Community Relations Service for the Department of Justice; and Brian Jones, General Counsel for the Department of Education. As the journalist Jack Anderson put it, "These are able, contributing citizens. They have much to offer the country as well as the black community. So Republicans rushed in where the other party feared to tread."²⁷

Concerning President Bush's staffing of the judiciary, it is notable that he has nominated African Americans to 5 of the 42 circuit court seats, and to 9 district judgeships.

Circuit (confirmed except for Duncan and Allen):

- Roger L. Gregory – 4th Circuit: Serving on the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals since December 27, 2000, he was a member of the Board of Directors of a Fortune 500 company, and a former chairman of the Industrial Development Authority of Richmond. He is a co-founder of the Richmond law firm of Wilder & Gregory.
- Barrington Parker, Jr. – 2nd Circuit: Most recently served on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York since 1994. Before that, Judge Parker engaged in general commercial litigation in New York City for 23 years at three different law firms, including Sullivan & Cromwell. He is a current member of the Yale Corporation and a former graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School.
- Lavenski R. Smith – 8th Circuit: A former chairman of the Arkansas Public Service Commission and an Associate Justice on the Arkansas Supreme Court, he has also been a professor of business law at John Brown University, and established the first minority-owned law firm in Springdale, Arkansas.
- Allyson K. Duncan – 4th Circuit: A former Commissioner of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, and an Associate Judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals, she has also

taught at the North Carolina Central University School of Law. She is a graduate of Duke University School of Law.

- Claude A. Allen – 4th Circuit: Currently serving as Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, he is a former Secretary of the Virginia Department of Health and Human Services and associate at Baker & Botts in Washington, D.C.

District (confirmed except for Robinson and Houston):

- Reggie B. Walton – District of Columbia: A former Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia since 2000, he also served as a former Senior White House Advisor for Crime under President George H. W. Bush. Judge Walton, active in legal education throughout his professional career, currently serves on the faculty of the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada, and as an instructor at the Harvard University Law School's Trial Advocacy Workshop.
- Julie A. Robinson – Kansas: A former U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the District of Kansas and a judge on the 10th Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel. Before that she was a former Senior Litigation Counsel for the U.S. Attorney's Office and a teacher of trial practice at the University of Kansas School of Law. She is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and sits on many committees, including the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges.
- Legrome D. Davis – Pennsylvania, Eastern District: A former Judge on the Court of Common Pleas, First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, and a University of Pennsylvania Attorney in the General Counsel Office, Judge Davis has been heavily involved in Pennsylvania's district attorney's office and court systems for over 25 years.
- Percy Anderson – California, Central District: A partner with Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal and former partner with Bryan Cave, L.L.P., Judge Anderson is also a past Assistant U.S. Attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.
- Henry E. Autrey – Missouri, Eastern District: A Missouri Circuit Court Judge since 1997 and an Associate Missouri Circuit Judge before that, he has served on the bench since 1986. Judge Autrey also serves on various court committees and is a member of the Missouri Trial Judge Education Committee, as well as a faculty member of the Missouri Judicial College.
- Morrison C. England – California, Eastern District: A 1997 Appointee to the Sacramento Superior Court and former Sacramento Municipal Court Judge, he also served as the chair of the Sacramento Superior Court Technology Committee and is a member of the Sacramento Superior Court's Executive Committee.

- William D. Quarles – Maryland: A former state trial judge on the Maryland Circuit Court in Baltimore City and prior partner with Venable, Baetjer and Howard in Baltimore, Judge Quarles is also a former Assistant U.S. Attorney in Baltimore.
- Stephen C. Robinson – New York, Southern District: A former U.S. Attorney with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Connecticut, he also served at the Federal Bureau of Investigation as Principle Deputy General Counsel and Special Assistant to the Director. He is a graduate of Cornell University and Cornell Law School.
- John Houston – California, Southern District: Judge Houston, 51, has been a magistrate judge since 1998. He also served as an assistant U.S. attorney in San Diego and as a legal officer in the U.S. Army. He received his J.D. from the University of Miami Law School.

Racial Preferences

Republicans support equal opportunity for everyone, not a guaranteed outcome for anyone. Regardless of their political affiliation, African Americans have agreed with this principle. Polls show they consistently oppose the use of racial preferences for hiring, public contracting, or admissions to colleges and universities – even when such preferences discriminate *in favor* of African Americans and *against* other groups.

For example, a spring 2001 *Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University* Poll of racial attitudes asked the question: “In order to give minorities more opportunity, do you believe that race or ethnicity should be a factor when deciding who is hired, promoted, or admitted to college, or that hiring, promotions, and college admissions should be based strictly on merit and qualifications other than race or ethnicity?” *Ninety-two percent of all respondents – and 86 percent of African American respondents – said these decisions should only be based on merit and qualifications, and that race should not be a factor.*

Other polls have yielded the same result: African Americans, like most Americans, oppose the use of racial preferences, regardless of who benefits.

- A December 1997 *New York Times/CBS News* Poll found that 69 percent of all respondents, and 63 percent of African American respondents, believe that “race should not be a factor” when asked how “equally qualified college applicants” should be treated.
- A January 2000 Zogby International poll of university students found that 77 percent of all respondents – and 52 percent of African American university students, as well as 71 percent of Hispanic students – reject the view that “schools should give minority students preference in the admissions process.”

- In a poll conducted by Paul Sniderman and Thomas Piazza for their recent book, *Black Pride and Black Prejudice* (2002), 90 percent of African American respondents oppose admitting an African American college applicant over a white applicant with SAT scores 25 points higher.

Several polls conducted during early 2003 show Americans agree by a ratio of *more than two to one* with President Bush's decision to oppose a raced-based admissions policy at the University of Michigan, believing students should be evaluated on their academic performance and accomplishments.

- A *Los Angeles Times* poll conducted from January 30 to February 2, 2003 asked 1,385 Americans whether they approved or disapproved of the administration's opposition to the University of Michigan's "racial preference admissions program." A clear majority – 55 percent – said they approved of the President's position, while 27 percent disapproved.
- An EPIC/MRA poll conducted from January 29 to February 3, 2003 surveyed 500 "active voters" on whether they favored or opposed the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy. That policy automatically grants 20 admission points on a 150-point scale – 15 percent of the total – to minority students wishing to enroll. A total of 63 percent said they opposed the Michigan policy while only 27 percent were in favor of it.
- A *Time Magazine* poll conducted January 15 and 16, 2003 showed 54 percent disapproved of programs that give racial preferences to minority applicants at colleges and universities, while 39 percent approved.
- A *Newsweek* poll conducted from January 16 and 17, 2003 showed that more than two-thirds of Americans opposed racial preferences in college admissions.

Racial preferences in hiring, contracting, and school admissions imply that African Americans cannot compete with others on a level playing field. Thomas Sowell, an African American economist, offers evidence to contradict some commonly held but refutable views on the merits of racial preferences: "What about the notion that blacks would not be able to get into colleges and universities without affirmative action?" he asks. "After quotas were banned in California's state universities, the number of black students in the University of California system has risen."²⁸ Furthermore, a leading study of public attitudes toward racial preferences found that "the most fundamental factor behind opposition to [race-based] affirmative action is one of principle."²⁹ In other words, Americans of all races adhere to the ideal of equal treatment, of judging every person by character and achievement and not by race.

Health Care

Republicans are committed to improving the health status of African Americans. Despite many medical advancements and increased life expectancy, disparities in health continue between whites and racial or ethnic minority groups. For instance, the age-adjusted death rate for the black population was 30 percent higher than for the non-Hispanic white population.³⁰ This rate is attributed to death from (among other things) diabetes, heart disease, cancer, HIV/AIDS, stroke, homicide, substance abuse, and suicide.

As the party of equality, the Republican party is working to eliminate such disparities. This administration has provided record funding levels for community health centers as a way to deliver preventive and primary care to patients regardless of their ability to pay. President Bush's fiscal year 2004 budget proposal requests \$1.627 billion for health centers, a \$169 million increase over FY03, as part of a five-year plan to create an additional 1,200 health center sites by 2006 to serve 6.1 million more patients.³¹ African Americans receive one-fourth (25.1 percent) of health center services.

In addition, Republicans are committed to helping minority families obtain affordable health insurance – a key component to improving health status. Almost 20 percent of all uninsured Americans are African Americans.³² The GOP-led House passed a prescription drug bill – not once, but twice.

- House bill H.R. 4954 would have added the drug coverage President Bush is now proposing. It would have created pilot programs promoting market competition among private health plans. Legislation such as this would help to mitigate the abnormally high African American age-adjusted death rate caused by factors such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and HIV/AIDS by making available increased prescription-drug coverage to those suffering from these maladies.
- The President's FY04 budget proposal also includes health-care tax credits that will facilitate individuals' purchase of health insurance and health care, including long-term care.

Despite Republican efforts, last year's Democratic-controlled Senate was unable to deliver on its promise to provide prescription drug coverage for Americans. This President and the new Republican-led 108th Congress will continue to work toward providing all Americans with affordable, voluntary coverage.

NIH Funding

Republicans doubled the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for FY 2003. In addition to supporting broad based medical research funding, Republicans were instrumental in the financing of research on health disparities between Americans of different races and ethnicities.

- The Director of NIH under the first President Bush created the Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) in 1990 to study the condition of minorities' health in America.
- In 2000, the Republican Senate voted unanimously to approve Senator Bill Frist's Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000, which created the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) to replace and augment the ORMH.

Republicans have supported generous funding of the NCMHD since its creation, voting unanimously to increase FY2003 funding by 41.5 percent.

Welfare Reform

The Republican-initiated welfare reform law of 1996 has led millions of Americans into a life of self-sufficiency. The reforms also created programs to encourage strong families and reduce out-of-wedlock births. Statistically, it is clear that the reforms have benefitted the African American community. Yet in the 107th Congress, the Democratic-controlled Senate failed to reauthorize this landmark program and, instead, merely extended it until January 11, 2003. It since has been extended through June 30, 2003. The program deserves full reauthorization.

- African American child poverty in 2001 is the lowest rate on record. Since welfare reform was enacted in 1996, over 1 million African American children have risen out of poverty, constituting an 11-percent swing. Hispanic child poverty has decreased by nearly one-third from 1995 to 2001. (Census Bureau)
- This improvement occurred despite a sluggish economy. In the past, African American child poverty increased during economic downturns. (Heritage Foundation, No. 1595)
- Welfare caseloads have fallen from 14 million recipients in 1994 to just 5 million in 2002. The number of families on welfare has decreased from 4.3 million in 1996 to 2.2 million in 2000. (Heritage)

- The employment rate of welfare recipients has risen from 11 percent in 1996 to 33 percent in 1999. (Heritage)
- From 1994 to 1999, the number of African American children living with single mothers decreased by 5 percent and the number living with married couples increased by 4 percent. (Heritage)
- The seemingly irreversible trend of increased out-of-wedlock births has in fact been reversed. It has fallen – 2 percent for African Americans since 1996, compared to a 1-percent increase among whites. (Heritage)

Community Renewal/Enterprise Zones

It was Republican Congressman and former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp who first proposed the concept of enterprise zones in the early 1980s to help communities with severe poverty and unemployment by providing them with targeted tax-relief incentives. Since then, Republicans have supported tax-relief incentives in lower-income, minority neighborhoods. This will foster the economic growth to help them end dependency on the federal government.

Such incentives enable many in these areas to begin, or expand, small businesses, to make community development possible, and to prove that the path to prosperity is not through further government programs and hand-outs, but rather through pursuit of the self-sufficiency that so many other Americans already enjoy.

The Community Renewal Tax Relief Act, sponsored by Republican Congressmen Jim Talent (R-MO) and J.C. Watts (R-OK) and passed by a Republican Congress in 2000, is a good illustration of this legacy of support for opportunity. It targets 40 of the country's poorest and most troubled communities for pro-growth tax benefits, regulatory relief, savings accounts, "brownfields" clean-up, and home-ownership opportunities. This law provides many benefits that African Americans in renewal communities can take advantage of: increased job creation, small business expansion and formation, moral renewal, expanded educational opportunities, greater private philanthropic aid to the poor, and greater participation by religious organizations in providing services to the poor.

Republicans have long believed in giving individuals the freedom to choose the best way to use incentives offered to them by the federal government. A reduction in the marginal tax rate and allowances for full expensing – as opposed to tax credits and hand-outs, which only provide a temporary band-aid of relief – are the right way to do that.

Democrat-led initiatives do not show this same understanding. For example, to receive benefits under the previous administration's empowerment-zone program, local officials had to present comprehensive community-development proposals to a federal board in Washington. It is not surprising that Jack Kemp, the progenitor of the program, believes that these regulatory requirements struck at the very nature of his concept, which is to *empower*, not to regulate.

Through Republican-led initiatives like the Talent-Watts Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000, steps are being taken to create, in effect, an enterprise zone for the 21st century. But Republicans had to wait five years for that legislation to pass. A Democratic administration only agreed to sign it after altering the Republican concept of true tax relief incentives by adding tax credits and hand-outs that reduced the law's ability to create real long-term growth. Republicans have a better plan of targeted tax incentives to rejuvenate communities in vital need of a hand up, not a hand-out – and they will continue to build and execute that plan using ideas like the Talent-Watts initiative.

Jack Kemp has called for a “no *American* left behind” proposal for urban renewal. Republicans are fighting to get it done. As the former HUD Secretary has said, “I think it's immoral to preach democracy and capitalism in Eastern Europe and not allow it to work in Eastern New York or East St. Louis or East L.A.”³³

Davis-Bacon Act

Unfortunately, Democrats have blocked Republicans year after year from repealing legislation that studies show hurt minorities and job growth. The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 limits the ability of minority businesses to compete for public construction projects and is a major reason why minority workers are under-employed in the construction trade. Repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act would eliminate hurtful prevailing wage laws that have been shown to promote racial discrimination.

The Davis-Bacon Act fostered the passage of prevailing wage laws in over 40 states that require wages for government and other construction projects to be set at or near union scale. This means that contractors on these projects are forced to hire all of their workers at the same salary as unionized members of the applicable occupation – and that could mean electricians, bricklayers, carpenters or any other workers – regardless of whether non-union contractors could do the same quality work at a lower cost, hiring workers at lower but mutually agreed-upon wages. African Americans, who represent a much smaller percentage of the construction industry work force than whites, are therefore not being hired at the levels they could be.

- A study by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy found that in 1990, African Americans in Michigan were 50 percent less represented in the construction industry than whites; black employment in Michigan construction was well below the national norm, reflecting both theoretical and empirical evidence that prevailing wage laws promote racial discrimination.³⁴

If Republicans could succeed in repealing the Davis-Bacon Act, it would help African Americans achieve higher employment levels and promote more construction in low-income urban areas.

Conclusion

The measure of compassion should not be how many needy people receive government aid, but how many people no longer need government assistance. It is not compassionate to support policies that keep people on welfare, that keep students in failing schools, or that require people to pay income into a retirement program that yields a poor return. Nor is it compassionate to tax the death of a small business owner or farmer or to stymie community renewal prospects by denying Americans true access to capital. And it is certainly not compassionate to assume that an African American cannot compete with others in school or at work. Republicans will continue to support policies based on the constitutional principle of the equality of all Americans. Such policies will help all Americans; but they will especially help those who have not yet shared equally in the American dream.

Written by Nathaniel Fogg, 224-2946.

End Notes

¹Jason L. Riley, "President Bush Needs to Lead His Party on Race," *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 2003.

²Congressional Record - House, 105th Congress, April 30, 1998, p. H2623.

³"A Five Year Statistical Glance at DC Public Schools," DC Public School System, September 30, 2002.

⁴"Speaking of Vouchers," *The Washington Post*, editorial, Saturday, May 3, 2003, p. A12.

⁵Zogby International poll, conducted July 9-15, 2002, for the Center for Education Reform.

⁶Zogby.

⁷The Children's Scholarship Fund, About CSF, <http://www.scholarshipfund.org/index.asp>.

⁸"Participation in Education: Elementary/Secondary Education Indicator 3 (2002), Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Public School Students," *The Condition of Education*, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002.

⁹The White House, Office of Media Affairs, Press Release, January 19, 2003.

¹⁰U.S. Department of Education, transcript of U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education William D. Hansen's testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, May 9, 2002.

¹¹U.S. Department of Education, End of Year Report: 2000-2001 Title IV/Federal Pell Grant Program; U.S. Department of Education. Budget Service, budget table entitled Department of Education Fiscal Year 2003 Congressional Action, November 12, 2002; The College Board. Trends in Student Aid 2002, Table 7.

¹²U.S. Department of Education, transcript of U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education William D. Hansen's testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, May 9, 2002.

¹³Deroy Murdock, "How Social Security Shortchanges Black Americans," The National Center for Public Policy Research, www.nationalcenter.org/NVSSMurdock1197.html, August 1997.

¹⁴Constantijn W.A. Panis and Lee Lillard, "Socioeconomic Differentials in the Return to Social Security," RAND Corporation Working Paper no. 96-05, 1996, p. 14-20.

¹⁵Deroy Murdock, "How Social Security Shortchanges Black Americans," The National Center for Public Policy Research, www.nationalcenter.org/NVSSMurdock1197.html, August 1997.

¹⁶Edward N. Wolff, "Racial Wealth Disparities: Is the Gap Closing?," The Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, Public Policy Brief No. 66 (2001), p. 24. Also, see "A Nation of Owners and Savers," Senate Republican Policy Committee (<http://www.senate.gov/~rpc/>), May 1, 2003.

¹⁷Edward N. Wolff, p. 26.

¹⁸"Impact of the Death Tax on African American Owned Businesses," Facts and Stats, U.S. House of Representatives Republican Conference, July 21, 1999.

¹⁹The White House.

²⁰Walter Williams, "A Minority View: Wanting Blacks to Think Alike," *WorldNetDaily*, October 23, 2002, p. 1.

²¹"BAMPAC 2002 National Opinion Poll Executive Summary," Black America's Political Action Committee, survey conducted by Public Opinion Strategies from June 20th to 30th, 2002.

²² Joyce Jones, "The Cabinet," *Black Enterprise Magazine*, Ethnic News Watch, June, 30, 2001, Vol. 31, No. 11, p. 239.

²³ Jones.

²⁴ "Presidential Appointments: The Year in Review," A Brookings Institute Governmental Studies Director's Breakfast, The Brookings Institute, December 18, 2001, p. 11.

²⁵ Armstrong Williams, "Bush's Black Appointees," Main Column, www.armstrongwilliams.com, December 16, 2002.

²⁶ List of African American appointees compiled from various sources: www.Results.Gov; Joyce Jones, "The Cabinet," p. 239; Jack Anderson and Douglas Cohn, "Blacks Among Bright Bush Stars," *The Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, UT, July 21, 2001.

²⁷ Jack Anderson and Douglas Cohn, "Blacks Among Bright Bush Stars," July 21, 2001.

²⁸ Thomas Sowell, "Quotas on Trial," *The Washington Times*, Op-Ed, January 10, 2003.

²⁹ Peter H. Schuck, "Affirmative Action: Past, Present, and Future," *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 2002, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 50.

³⁰ "Closing the Health Gap: HHS Fact Sheet," Facts, Department of Health and Human Services, Press Release, November 15, 2001.

³¹ Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2004, Department of Health & Human Services, www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2004/hhs.html.

³² "Health Insurance Coverage: 2000," U.S. Census Bureau, Table C., August 22, 2002.

³³ Jack Kemp, *National Public Radio*, Interview with Jack Kemp, 1996.

³⁴ Richard Vedder, "Michigan's Prevailing Wage Law and its Effects on Government Spending and Construction Employment," Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Executive Summary, September 2, 1999.

Here is what prominent African Americans have said about the Republican agenda and its core issues:

On Leadership and the Republican Agenda

- “President Bush has done far more to address the everyday concerns of black Americans than any president of recent memory. President Bush has pushed programs aimed at facilitating home ownership, [education reform], welfare reform and faith-based initiatives—all issues that rate amongst the chief concerns of the black voting populace.” – Armstrong Williams
- “It is a political myth that the Republican agenda of cultural issues has made the GOP inhospitable to minorities. ... As elections and polls have demonstrated, the issue of preferences has remarkable crossover appeal among rank-and-file union members, independents, moderates, liberals, suburbanites, Democrats, Hispanics, women, and-yes-blacks. There is substantial to overwhelming support in every demographic group for ending preferences.” – Ward Connerly
- “Any Republican agenda that is intended for all Americans should remain a conservative agenda.” – Peter N. Kirsanow, an African American Republican who sits on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

On Education and School Choice

- “Bush’s education reforms—specifically his support of vouchers--could help redress this inequality by holding public schools accountable for the proper education of their students, while ensuring that poor people—mostly of color—no longer remain trapped in schools that are failing their needs. This change could be the single most important factor in redressing the achievement gap between the races.” – Armstrong Williams

On Racial Preferences

- “Freedom is such a precious commodity. Yet sometimes the freest of people devalue it the most. We Americans intermarry and blend into the melting pot of America, yet our leading institutions cling to racial classifications as if they are attached to us like an appendage to our body. . . . Beneath the mind-numbing blather about diversity is a belief that it is appropriate for government to engineer or rig the final outcome of competitions for college admission, jobs and public contracts. Ronald Reagan understood that race, gender and ethnic preferences were a deprivation of individual liberty, and that they were morally wrong. He spoke out against such practices with clear and compelling conviction. . . . He understood that true compassion meant equipping individuals to be self-sufficient and unfettered by the intrusions of government into their lives.” – Ward Connerly

On Social Reform

- “In many ways, compassionate conservatism has given the Republican Party a relevance in racial issues that they haven’t had before. It says that social reform has to, in some way,

engage individual responsibility. That idea has a lot of legs to it... and people seem to buy it. Republicans and conservatives have come a long way on social policy in the last ten to fifteen years. They should have confidence in themselves.” – Shelby Steele, Research Fellow with the Hoover Institute and author of *The Content of Our Character* (1991), which argues that African Americans should embrace individual responsibility rather than group remedies.

- “The real culprits are those who created a system that makes it dangerous to work and safe to loaf.” – Thomas Sowell
- “The black family – which survived slavery, discrimination, poverty, wars, and depressions – began to come apart as the federal government moved in with its well-financed programs to ‘help’.” – Thomas Sowell

On President Bush’s Appointments

- “...few in the press acknowledged that while Clinton facilitated the ethnic diversity of his cabinet, he tended not to appoint blacks to top policy positions. As former Clinton Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers snorted after vacating her post, the upper echelon of Clinton’s cabinet is a “white boys club.” Like Clinton, President Bush has consciously assembled an ethnically diverse cabinet. The Washington Post reports that 25 percent of Bush’s appointees are minorities. Bush has far superceded Clinton, however, when it comes to appointing blacks to top posts. According to a recent White House release, minorities have filled 45 percent of the administration’s highest policy positions.” – Armstrong Williams