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**To: State Legislative Council
Special Committee on Affirmative Action**

Dear Fellow Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to serve with you on this committee. Thank you for reading my proposals and this lengthy introductory letter for those proposals.

This committee's efforts have seemed designed to focus on only a very narrow part of Affirmative Action: race, ethnicity, gender. This puzzles me, given the small effect these categories have in the overall picture of Affirmative Action. Why such a myopic focus?

Affirmative Action is inclusive.

As long as we have definable groups of people who are tangibly disadvantaged, then there is a compelling interest in making efforts to identify barriers which may cause those disparities and try to eliminate them, to achieve equal opportunity **for all**.

Our goal should be to assure that all sorts of people in our society are participating in the labor force and economy. If a definable segment stands out as not, then we should take a studious look to see if there are barriers which should be addressed. As a nation, we have always focused on these disparities, and sought to address them.

We have never focused on only sex or race in our Affirmative Action efforts. "Affirmative Action" is a broad concept.

In the 60's, there was a major focus on Poverty In Rural Appalachia with numerous special programs. Jobs, educational programs, loans and contracts were created for this overwhelming White geographic population.

In the 70's, the focus shifted to Rural Poverty in general, for America's mostly White rural poor. And numerous special programs (jobs and education, loans and contracts) were created for this geographic (rural) demographic.

The Targeted Jobs Acts focused on jobs and education and contracting programs for geographic locations hard hit by plant closings. Again, no focus on sex, race, ethnicity, etc. The overwhelming number of beneficiaries were White, and male.

Our state Affirmative Action rules are mainly geared toward veterans and people with disabilities. Out of the six Affirmative Action rules, only one covers race, ethnicity and gender (lumped together).

The effects of Affirmative Action in Wisconsin and nationally have historically been for the benefit of all types of disadvantaged peoples, most of whom are White and male. Most Affirmative Action efforts continue to benefit mostly White and male individuals.

We have heard testimony that creation of the Affirmative Action rules in the 1960's, requiring the advertising of jobs, finally allowed all sorts of people to know of and apply for openings. Today, most of those who benefit from that opportunity and are hired or promoted are White and male. Recall my example of my family and how millions of White men have had the 'previously-denied' chance to become upwardly mobile only after their employers were obligated to comply with Affirmative Action requirements.

We have heard testimony that race, origin and gender are only a small part in the numerous "consideration factors" used in university admissions. In fact, most of the consideration factors work to select White and male applicants, and more lower test-scoring White applicants are admitted due to "consideration factors" than are non-Whites. The testimony and evidence showed that these lower-scoring Whites are often admitted while higher-scoring minority applicants are not.

Unlike some other states, Wisconsin does not use a *point system* for either university admissions or employment. The only points used here are for veterans, so it does not seem that the Wisconsin approach to Affirmative Action raises any of the questions or quandaries which have been at issue elsewhere. Our programs are narrowly tailored and appropriate.

So, among the many consideration factors, there appears to be no reason to diminish or remove race, ethnicity or gender. They are a small part of a much broader process. Their effect is small when seen as part of the real picture.

If anything, we have heard expert testimony of how Wisconsin's state Affirmative Action rules are among the *weakest* in the United States. They may be in need of a boost.

The purpose of a committee is to gather information and then make informed decisions based upon the information we have had presented to us, rather than to implement any pre-determined positions. Based upon the overwhelming testimony, we must endorse the current Wisconsin Affirmative Action process and even expand it.

Virtually all of the testimony we have received is in support of Affirmative Action and its important benefits.

The only contrary testimony we have heard was by Ward Connerly, who is not from Wisconsin, and who had no insight as to how our system operates. Mr. Connerly spoke to us regarding his experiences in university admissions in California, Michigan and other places which operate under quota systems or "point" systems. Those, of course, do not exist in Wisconsin. Our only "points" go to veterans or their spouses.

Even Mr. Connerly stated: "I am not opposed to Affirmative Action, per se." "I believe that expanding the base of recruiting is OK." "We should not have a narrow view of merit, based only on test scores." We "should look at socio-economic factors." This seems to be in accord with how the Wisconsin Affirmative Action process does operate, as opposed to the other states Mr. Connerly described (i.e., Michigan, where "stereotypical points" were automatically added to scores of minority applicants). [Mr. Connerly did not follow up on his promised list of recommendations he believes would create fair considerations and address socio-economic factors. We certainly cannot remove something from Affirmative Action without taking the responsibility to put effective processes in its place.]

However, we must disregard Mr. Connerly's testimony, not only because it has nothing to do with Wisconsin, but also because we have been denied the opportunity to hear from and question a person with a different national perspective. Dean Frank Wu was directed to cancel his plane reservations (at a cost to him). Though he was eager to come, he was told that his testimony was not needed.

Having cancelled Dean Wu, a national proponent of Affirmative Action, we must also disregard Mr. Connerly's out-of-state opinion.

This leaves us with 100% testimony endorsing Affirmative Action as practiced in Wisconsin! As a responsible committee, we **MUST** base our recommendations on the body of information which has been presented to us.

Since a purpose of Affirmative Action is to "eliminate barriers to equal opportunity for all people," we should use this process to consider expansion of our programs. Rep. Suder made an important point in describing how students from his rural district had a lower than normal university admission rate. As our population has shifted both rural areas and some definable parts of cities have lower funding of schools, and the graduates do not have the same programs or opportunities as more wealthy districts. Our admissions function should identify and consider the variety of disadvantaged populations in our state, and the diversity those students bring. This is what the broader context of Affirmative Action has always been about.

To that end, I am submitting the following proposals. I appreciate your tolerance of my lengthy letter, and your serious consideration of these proposals in light of the testimony we have heard.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Gregg

PROPOSALS

1. That the committee recognize Affirmative Action, as it is currently practiced by Wisconsin state government in employment, contracting and school admissions as an appropriate method for helping to address economic and educational disparities, and for serving the compelling interest of identifying and eliminating barriers to equal opportunity for all people.

2. In order to achieve consistency in the area of state contracting, Wisconsin should adopt the standards and requirements used by the federal government as implemented by the U.S. Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

3. In admissions, Wisconsin universities should continue using all current categories of “consideration factors” to achieve a diverse student body, and should expand those categories to better address economically and geographically disadvantaged populations (such as graduates from high schools in a rural county or a specific geographic area of a city which is economically disadvantaged; or which has significantly fewer high school graduates attending the university than the state average).

4. Current Affirmative Action programs in government employment are narrowly tailored and appropriate, and the committee endorses these and endorses continued use of extra points for veterans, disabled veterans and spouses of disabled veterans to assist in obtaining state employment.