

- HOME
- ▶ JOB MARKET
- ▶ REAL ESTATE
- ▶ AUTOS
- NEWS

SEARCH [▶ Go to Advanced Search/Archive](#)



▶ GO TO **MEMBER CENTER** ▶ LOG OUT

Welcome, [jlife2005](#)



**Donate Now**  
to The Neediest Cases Fund

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

- E-Mail This Article
- Printer-Friendly Format
- Most E-Mailed Articles

- [International](#)
- [National](#)
- [Washington](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [New York Region](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [NYT Front Page](#)
- [Corrections](#)

## Groups Support University of Michigan Affirmative Action Case

By **DIANA JEAN SCHEMO**

**W**ASHINGTON, Feb. 17 — A month after the Bush administration filed a brief with the Supreme Court opposing affirmative action policies at the University of Michigan, more than 300 organizations representing academia, major corporations, labor unions and nearly 30 of the nation's top former military and civilian defense officials, announced that they would file briefs supporting the university by Tuesday's deadline.

The friend-of-the-court briefs, expected to top five dozen, may challenge the record of 62 briefs filed during the court's 1978 decision in University of California Board of Regents vs. Bakke. The variety of organizations filing briefs this time reflects the broad reach of affirmative action policies in the quarter century since the Supreme Court's landmark Bakke ruling.

Speaking by satellite to hundreds of university presidents gathered at a hotel for the American Council on Education's annual conference here, Mary Sue Coleman, the president of the University of Michigan, defended admissions policies at the university's law school and undergraduate divisions, urging the Supreme Court "not to turn back the clock."

"The debate over the landmark 1978 Supreme Court decision," Dr. Coleman said, "is a debate about the future direction of this country."

Briefs supporting Michigan are being filed by 64 Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft, Bank One, Boeing, General Motors, Shell and American Express. Among the 29

**TIMES NEWS TRACKER**

Topics	Alerts
<a href="#">University of Michigan</a>	
<a href="#">Affirmative Action</a>	
<a href="#">Admissions Standards</a>	
<a href="#">Equal Educational Opportunities</a>	
<a href="#">Create Your Own</a>   <a href="#">Manage Alerts</a>	
<a href="#">Take a Tour</a>	
<a href="#">Sign Up for Newsletters</a>	

- OPINION
- [Editorials/Op-Ed](#)
- [Readers' Opinions](#)



- FEATURES
- [Arts](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Movies](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [NYC Guide](#)
- [Dining & Wine](#)
- [Home & Garden](#)
- [Fashion & Style](#)
- [Crossword/Games](#)
- [Cartoons](#)
- [Magazine](#)

The New York Times STORE



Pinus Insignis, at Osborne  
[Buy Now](#)

[Week in Review](#)  
[Multimedia/Photos](#)  
[College](#)  
[Learning Network](#)

#### SERVICES

[Archive](#)  
[Classifieds](#)  
[Book a Trip](#)  
[Personals](#)  
[Theater Tickets](#)  
[NYT Store](#)  
[NYT Mobile](#)  
[About NYTDigital](#)  
[Jobs at NYTDigital](#)  
[Online Media Kit](#)  
[Our Advertisers](#)

#### MEMBER CENTER

[Your Profile](#)  
[E-Mail](#)  
[Preferences](#)  
[News Tracker](#)  
[Premium Account](#)  
[Site Help](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)

#### NEWSPAPER

[Home Delivery](#)  
[Customer Service](#)  
[Electronic Edition](#)  
[Media Kit](#)  
[Community Affairs](#)  
[Text Version](#)

military and civilian defense officials filing briefs supporting the university are three former chairmen of the joint chiefs of staff and several four-star generals. In addition, 14,000 law school students lent their signatures to a brief defending race-conscious policies in higher education that will be submitted on Tuesday.

In each case, the briefs are arguing that racial and ethnic diversity have become an essential feature of success in the United States, whether in a university offering an education that challenges students to know others from different backgrounds and perspectives, or a medical school that sees minority doctors as opening new avenues of research, or military leaders who seek well-educated minorities to fill the officer corps.

Taken together, the scores of briefs amounted to a broad endorsement of affirmative action policies by leading sectors of society at the moment they are most in jeopardy.

On April 1, the Supreme Court is expected to hear oral arguments in the case against Michigan, which challenges systems that give minority students extra points, bolstering their chances for admission.

Though President Bush publicly criticized affirmative action and derided the use of "quotas" in announcing his plans to file a brief opposing the university, the administration stopped short of asking the Supreme Court to overturn the Bakke decision. That decision opposed quotas, but it said racial equity was such a compelling social concern that universities could consider race in admissions decisions.

So far, 15 briefs have been filed opposing Michigan's affirmative action policies. A White House spokesman did not return a call today seeking comment. The Center for Individual Rights, which has also supported the plaintiffs in the Michigan cases, could also not be reached for comment.

"This is not a case about college admissions alone," President Coleman said. "It touches on every major sector of our country, and the outcome will influence the direction of America's public policy."

Dr. Coleman cited research her university has done, which contends that students in more diverse environments "learn better."

"They are more analytical, and more engaged," Dr. Coleman said. "The teaching environment is more enlightening. The discussion is livelier and more representative of real-world issues."

But perhaps the most striking arguments surrounding affirmative action today came from the variety of groups across society coming to the defense of admissions policies that take race into account.

"Diversity creates stronger companies," said Kenneth Frazier, senior vice president and general counsel at Merck, the pharmaceutical company. "The work we do directly impacts patients of all types around the globe. Understanding people is essential to our success."

Adm. Dennis C. Blair, who retired last year as the commander in chief of the Pacific Command, said that for him "the argument is combat efficiency." Admiral Blair recalled the Vietnam War, when minorities were heavily represented in the ranks of enlisted men, who come to the military from high school, and hardly at all in the officer corps, which is made up of college graduates. Racial resentments ran high, he recalled.

"We need to take special measures to ensure there are race conscious policies of admissions at universities, so they can go on to become part of our officer corps," said Admiral Blair. "We need these officers both for their own talent, and so that we have an armed forces that is not split the way it was early in my career."

The military brief was signed by former leading figures in the armed services, including Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf; William S. Cohen and William J. Perry, former defense secretaries; and Adm. William J. Crowe Jr., Gen. Hugh H. Shelton and Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, former chairmen of the joint chiefs of staff.

Though Michigan is a public university, the court's decision will affect public and private universities alike. Its impact will be felt most keenly at the country's two or three dozen most selective institutions, said David Ward, president of the American Council on Education, which filed a brief supporting Michigan on Friday that was joined by 54 other higher education associations.

Kermit L. Hall, president of Utah State University, said that while he supported affirmative action, the court's ruling could have little impact on the large majority of the nation's campuses, including his own, because they already have policies of open admissions.

---

[Metro Briefing | New Jersey: Princeton: Support For Race Policy](#) (February 19, 2003)

[300 Groups File Briefs to Support the University of Michigan in an Affirmative Action Case](#) (February 18, 2003) \$

[National Briefing | Washington: Briefs On University Admissions](#) (February 14, 2003)

[Service Academies Defend Use of Race in Their Admissions Policies](#) (January 28, 2003) \$

Find more results for [University of Michigan](#) and [Affirmative Action](#) .

---

Doing research? Search the archive for more than 500,000 articles:

---

 [E-Mail This Article](#)

 [Printer-Friendly Format](#)

 [Most E-Mailed Articles](#)

---

[Home](#) | [Back to Education](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Help](#) | [Back to Top](#)



**Donate Now**  
to The Neediest Cases Fund

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

[Copyright 2003 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)