

Affirmative action worth 2nd look, key Dems say

By Bob Minzesheimer
USA TODAY

Key congressional Democrats Sunday endorsed President Clinton's plan to review affirmative action programs but clashed with Republicans who claim "reverse discrimination" against white males.

"I think what began as an effort to redress the legitimate concerns and needs of African-Americans has expanded to other things entirely unexpected.

And if every 30 years you look at a program, that's not so bad," Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., said on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

House Minority Whip David Bonior, D-Mich., said he's willing to look at reforms. But "what we ought not to do is engage in some cheap political demagoguery over this issue."

Rep. Kweisi Mfume, D-Md., former head of the Congressional Black Caucus, said GOP presidential candidate Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas and others criticizing affirmative action "are making this something that it shouldn't be. It's dividing us as a nation."

House Majority Leader Dick Arme, R-Texas, joined colleagues who want to repeal any preferences based on race or gender.

"If you make a special advantage for somebody because of the color of their

skin, that is as much as discrimination as you say we're going to give you a special disadvantage," he told CBS's *Face the Nation*.

Arme said he's willing to rely on "the goodness of the American people, not what is the bully and guile of the federal government."

Democrats and Republicans continue to differ on the definition of affirmative

action, as illustrated by the debate between GOP presidential contender Pat Buchanan and California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown — on ABC's *This Week With David Brinkley*.

"We're holding back working-class whites, working-class Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, and others for one reason. That's to advance the cause and to salvage some guilty consciences of people who aren't paying the price of affirmative action,"

Buchanan said.

Said Brown: "It's wrong to characterize most affirmative action programs ... as being 'No Irish need apply.' Those kinds of programs don't exist."

Clinton said during the weekend that he's not "backing off from giving a leg up" to the disadvantaged, "but we shouldn't be defending things that we can't defend. So it's time to review it, discuss it and be straightforward about it."



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MFUME: 'It's dividing us as a nation.'



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ARMEY: Prejudice in 'special advantage'