

Washington Suspicious Of Measure

In response to proposed legislation (H.B. 360) that would abolish affirmative action in all operations of state government, state Rep. LeAnna Washington, Mount Airy, said she is suspicious of the motives behind the bill.

"The 20th century has been pure hell for African Americans, women and other minorities that have attempted to establish themselves in a society dominated by the 'good-ole-boy' network," said Washington. "Affirmative action policies were implemented to try and remedy the inequities of past discrimination, but now some individuals are crying foul because past wrongs are finally being made right, and that is a threat to the status quo."

The legislation proposes "prohibiting discrimination or preferential treatment of an individual or group in operations of the Commonwealth's system of public employment, public education or public contracting."

If the bill passes the General Assembly and is signed by Gov. Thomas Ridge, it would take effect immediately.

"I believe this issue is politically motivated to divide the Democratic Party," said Washington. "If that were not true then why wouldn't the sponsor of the bill realize that, besides African Americans, other sources of affirmative action violations include sex discrimination against white females, age discrimination against older white males and discrimination against people with physical disabilities?"

Washington said she does not object to revisiting affirmative action policies to see that they have been fully implemented and are measured for their success. Those policies that waste taxpayers' money should be corrected.

The legislation was introduced by Rep. Ron Gamble, Allegheny, along with several bipartisan co-sponsors, and has been referred to State Government Committee.

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