

# Helms bill would eliminate Affirmative Action

By Nita Lelyveld  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton is almost finished reviewing federal Affirmative Action programs and will soon reveal what action he may take.

Meanwhile, Republican Sen. Jesse Helms has introduced a bill to eliminate all such programs.

Calling his bill the "Act to End Unfair Preferential Treatment," Helms said in a speech on the Senate floor that Affirma-

tive Action programs "have done more to harm good race relations, and have been exceedingly costly to the American taxpayers."

The conservative lawmaker — who targeted Affirmative Action in his 1990 Senate campaign against Black architect Harvey Gantt — insisted race was not the reason for his bill.

"It is about fairness," he said. "It is about putting an end to reverse discrimination at the hands of ruthless bureaucrats."

Clinton promised to review all 160 federal preference programs in employment housing and education after congressional Republicans indicated that Affirmative Action was on the table.

"I want to know what these programs are, exactly," Clinton said during a news conference. "I want to know whether they are working. I want to know whether there is some other way we can reach any objective without giving a preference by race or gender in some of these programs."

While vowing to "continue to fight discrimination where it exists," Clinton said he wanted to "emphasize need-based programs where we can because they work better and have a bigger impact and generate broader support."

Clinton said he wanted to look closely at "the gray area, where there is, let's say, a minority scholarship, or a contracting set-aside that...really is often got around, because of the way they are written."

Helms, meanwhile, said he expected to be criticized by "the liberal brethren" with

"their holier-than-thou lamentations." He said it would just be "the usual outburst of the usual phony demagoguery."

But he said Americans support such an effort.

"After 30 years, it is obvious that this social experiment called affirmative action has outlived its usefulness," Helms said. "It is time for the federal government to scrap these programs, and restore the principles upon which our country was built: personal responsibility, self-reliance and hard work."

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