

Black chamber solicits for affirmative action

by **Anthony S. Twyman**

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Affirmative action is under fire and the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Philadelphia is not about to stand idly by while it occurs.

The chamber, which represents about 250 black-owned businesses in the Delaware Valley, has mailed a letter to more than 500 business advocates and owners asking them to oppose a bill in the state Legislature that would abolish affirmative action in state contracts, hiring, and colleges.

It urges them to write letters to state Rep. Ron Gamble, who introduced the bill last month, and to Gov. Ridge supporting the fair-hiring and -contracting program.

"We sense that there is a rush on the part of some elected officials . . . to single out affirmative action as a political target," A. Bruce Crawley, the chamber's chairman, said yesterday. "The concept of affirmative action is being scapegoated."

Crawley said the program still played a vital role in helping minority-owned businesses participate in the state's economy.

"We don't know whether Rep. Gamble fully understands the economic implications" of his proposal, Crawley said.

The chamber cited an estimated \$32 million in business taxes paid by African-American businesses in Philadelphia. Those firms employ 5,500 workers who pay an estimated \$3.9 million in wage taxes annually, the letter states.

The chamber plans to compile a list of companies in the region that support Pennsylvania's affirmative-action law. It will be forwarded to members of the Legislature and to other local elected officials, Crawley said.



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statement.

"It would be tragic if a concept that has produced so many jobs and so much economic expansion were to fall victim to political demagoguery," Chamber President Dennis Baxter said in a prepared

"We believe that business leaders in the Greater Philadelphia area will be able to see through the rhetoric and recognize the solid potential affirmative action has always represented for continued economic expansion," Baxter said. ■