

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Upon learning that the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of using affirmative action as a fair barometer for admission to colleges and universities across the nation, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 31) issued the following statement:

"Today, America is a winner, for the Supreme Court has now been added to the multitude of voices who for years have advocated equality and diversity in our schools.

"However, more work must be done. Despite yesterday's ruling, there is still a Bush doctrine that says diversity is not a compelling state interest. Meanwhile, already too few minorities attend and complete four year colleges. For example, only 16 percent of Latino high school graduates, from the ages 25 to 29, have bachelor's degrees. For African Americans, that number is 21 percent.

"Certainly, America is a better place than it was in 1978 when 'affirmative action' was introduced into the American lexicon. Discrimination, however, continues to find ways to suffocate opportunity for women and minorities. Indeed, women still earn only 72 cents for every man's dollar; Latina women with college degrees still earn less on average than Caucasian men with high school diplomas.

"Affirmative action is an indispensable tool that America and time have prudently employed to combat discrimination. The goals of affirmative action - expanded opportunities and greater inclusion for all people into the mainstream - are essential elements for the next generation of

young leaders and their families struggling to improve their lives and whose hard work strengthens our nation. With yesterday's ruling, the judicial branch of the federal government has offered its agreement saying unequivocally that diversity does and should count.

"The fight for equality continues, but the victory gained from this one battle is certainly sweet."