

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statement By: GOVERNOR JEB BUSH
Regarding the Michigan Supreme Court Ruling

TALLAHASSEE- "The Supreme Court's decision today acknowledges that race-conscious college admissions policies are ultimately at odds with the guarantee of equal protection under the law. Instead of striking down these policies on this basis, the court allowed their limited use, but suggested their eventual demise.

"The Court specifically referenced Florida's race-neutral admissions program and encouraged other states to follow our lead. We agree with the Court's opinion that similar programs should be the norm across the country. Our experience in Florida has proven that race-neutral programs support meaningful diversity.

"Four years ago, Florida launched One Florida to increase opportunity and diversity in our state universities without the divisive crutch of quotas, racial preferences, or set asides. Critics of One Florida predicted sharp declines in minority students. However, today's minority enrollment in state universities, including flagship universities, is the same or higher than four years ago. In the 2002-03 class, 36.2 percent of all new students were minorities, as were 23.5 percent of all new graduate students. One Florida's success clearly demonstrates that diversity can be attained through race-neutral means.

"One Florida has successfully leveled the education playing field for all Floridians regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or zip code. We have broadened the search for talented minorities through greater outreach and recruitment, and increased access for and success of under-represented students. We provide AP course opportunities statewide for students in low performing schools. From 2001 to 2002 the number of African American and Hispanic students who took AP examinations increased by 21 percent and 22 percent respectively. Florida also provides free SAT test preparation for low-income students and free PSAT or PLAN testing for all tenth graders.

"We remain committed to diversity in Florida, but believe it must be achieved in ways that comply with the Constitution's purpose of doing away with all government discrimination based on race. We're going to stay the course on race-neutral admissions and expand our programs to reach all Florida students who yearn for higher education."