



Trump Administration Reverses Obama Guidelines on Race in College Admissions

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The Trump administration has rescinded policies that direct colleges and universities to increase diversity by considering race in college admissions.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions made the announcement Tuesday, saying the Obama-era guidelines that offered legal recommendations for schools seeking to consider race as an admissions factor, were "unnecessary, outdated, inconsistent with existing law or otherwise improper."

The move would allow colleges and universities to take a race-neutral approach to students they consider for admission, dealing a blow to previous policies that educational institutions consider race in the interest of achieving diversity.

Anurima Bhargava, who led civil rights enforcement in schools during the Obama administration, said the guidelines has been offered to schools that were exploring the continued use of affirmative action legally.

"This is a purely political attack that benefits nobody," she told the Wall Street Journal, which first broke the story.

Civil rights groups were also quick to condemn the move.

Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association, said, "Affirmative action has proven to be one of the most effective ways to create diverse and inclusive classrooms."

She said the announcement underscored the stakes surrounding the upcoming Supreme Court appointment.

The court's most recent significant ruling on the subject bolstered colleges' use of race among many factors in the admission process. The opinion was written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, who has recently announced his retirement, giving President Donald Trump a chance to replace him with a justice who may be more reliably skeptical of admissions programs that take race and ethnicity into account.

But supporters of the move say there are other ways besides affirmative action to create a more diverse student body.

“There’s the socioeconomic argument,” Ilya Shapiro, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, told Fox News. “But there’s also looking into better outreach at high schools, better financial aid packages, and reducing other priorities like those for legacy students and athletes.”

The Trump administration move comes as the Justice Department investigates whether Harvard University unlawfully discriminates against Asian-American students by holding them to higher admissions standards. The investigation was revived last year after Obama civil rights officials dismissed a similar complaint.

In a separate action, a 2014 lawsuit expected to go to trial in October, claims Harvard deliberately discriminates against Asian-Americans by putting a limit on the number of Asian students who are admitted.

In a similar suit in 2013, a case filed by Edward Blum, a legal activist against racial and ethnic admissions criteria, against the University of Texas-Austin failed to prove that the university had favored minority students.