

Talking Points

www.defeataz107.org

1. What is Ward Connerly's Anti-Equal Opportunity Proposition?

Proposition 107, which will appear on the November 2nd state ballot, is Ward Connerly's latest attempt to eliminate equal opportunity programs in our state. The Arizona Legislature took steps to put Proposition 107 on the ballot even after Connerly failed to qualify it in 2008 due to insufficient support from Arizonans.

Proposition 107 would go so far as to change Arizona's Constitution. It would make it unconstitutional for the state (and local governments, schools and universities) to offer any type of equal opportunity initiatives for under-represented communities, including women, men, and people of color, in Arizona in the areas of public employment, public education or public contracting.

2. Who is Ward Connerly? (*See the fact sheet*)

Ward Connerly is a former member of the California Board of Regents. He's also a multi-million dollar businessman working to eliminate equal opportunity programs around the country. Connerly got his start in business in California years ago through a program designed to help women and minority businesses—the very type of program he is trying to destroy in Arizona.

3. What Will Happen if Proposition 107 Becomes Law?

If Proposition 107 were in the Arizona Constitution, important programs that benefits our local communities, and helps underrepresented communities, including men, women and communities of color, would be prohibited. Here are examples of programs that would be eliminated:

- ▶ Terminate programs designed to encourage girls interested in math and science to pursue careers in those fields.
- ▶ Eliminate programs and scholarships which encourage people of color to enter medical careers in underserved communities, or to become K-12 teachers.

- ▶ Disallow notifications of government contracting opportunities and dramatically reduce contracts awarded to women-and minority-owned businesses.
- ▶ Eliminate the Summer Bridge Program which helps Native American students prepare for the academic challenges they face in college in science, math, engineering and technology.
- ▶ Eliminate battered women shelters that create a safe space for victims of domestic violence and their children.
- ▶ Scholarships, fellowships and grants at all levels of education that take gender and race into account are at risk.
- ▶ Gender-specific community and public health programs, such as breast, cervical and prostate cancer screenings, breastfeeding promotions, or prenatal smoking cessation programs.

In short, there are countless initiatives across the country that affirmatively use race and gender to address the unwarranted obstacles women and people of color encounter. Because these vital programs are neither color-blind or gender-blind, they are all put at risk by attacks on equal opportunity.

4. Why Should You Oppose This Initiative?

This proposition seeks to divide our state. It's divisive. It's ill-intended. It will immediately re-establish the old norms—which are barriers, which is unequal opportunity for women and people of color. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to compete and to succeed in Arizona. We all benefit because we're all in this together. Helping to strengthen communities helps us all because a strong Arizona is built on strong communities.

Proposition 107 will hurt our state's ability to educate and produce a diverse, talented workforce. We're in a global economy in which businesses know that diversity and a work force that looks like the world in which they interact is essential.

Diversity and inclusion are good for business. The buying power of people of color and women is increasing significantly.

**Please contact WE CAN! United to Defeat Prop 107 Campaign, PO Box 17841,
Tucson, Arizona 85731, (520) 270-5390 with any questions.**

DECODING CONNERLY: Ward Connerly Research Fact Sheet

Ward Connerly is an African-American Republican based in California who is a race activist who has for years toured the country proposing anti-equal opportunity ballot initiatives.

- **Connerly claims he wants to live in a color-blind society, yet welcomes the support of the white supremacist movement and the Ku Klux Klan,** saying “If the Ku Klux Klan thinks that equality is right, God bless them. Thanks them for finally reaching the point where logic and reason are being applied instead of hate.”¹

- **Connerly’s campaigns deceptively employ civil rights language.** He calls his proposals “civil rights” initiatives, when they are the opposite. He invokes the language and metaphors of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King to persuade people to sign onto his anti-equal opportunity initiatives.²

- **Connerly goes to extremes.** In 2003, he tried to do away with California’s collection of health data and other statistics essential to monitoring racial disparities. His proposition, the Racial Privacy Initiative,³ failed. Of the \$1.7 million in donations for that campaign, \$1.4 million came from six right-wing, extremist donors.⁴

- **Connerly breaks the law.** The California Racial Privacy Initiative was funded through the American Civil Rights Coalition (ACRC), a Connerly-run nonprofit organization. The state of California sued and fined ACRC for violating campaign finance laws. **Connerly admitted violating the law and paid a hefty fine.** He later tried to skirt financial disclosure rules again, in Michigan in 2006.⁵

- **Connerly engages in fraud and unethical tactics.** Connerly has a history of lying to obtain the required signatures for his anti-equal opportunity petitions. **In 2006, hundreds of Michigan citizens testified in federal district court and before the state’s Civil Rights Commission that Connerly’s petition circulators lied and misled them.**⁶

- **Connerly’s a hypocrite.** Connerly made a profit through his business from the very laws/programs he has sought to repeal. Connerly & Associates (started in 1973 by Connerly and his wife) reported about \$1.2

million in sales in 1994. However, fifteen companies that hired the company in the 1990's told grant regulators that they had hired a minority and woman-owned business to comply with affirmative action laws.⁷

● **Connerly is getting rich. Connerly has parlayed his anti-civil rights campaigns into a lucrative business.** In 2006 alone, Connerly took home \$1.6 million in salary and speaking fees of the \$2.4 million ACRC and the related American Civil Rights Institute (ACRI) raised that year.⁸

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¹ "Connerly Criticized For Klan Comments," The Associated Press, November 4, 2006.

² "A Preference for Deception," by Kimberle Crenshaw. *Ms. Magazine*, Winter 2008, p. 39.

³ "The Assault on Diversity," by Lee Cokorinos. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. p. 18.

⁴ "Contracting Connerly," by Mary Moore and Jennifer Hahn. *Ms Magazine*, Winter 2008, p. 37..

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Id. 2.

⁷ "The Assault on Diversity," by Lee Cokorinos, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. p. 38.

⁸ Id. 4

Making the Case for Equal Opportunity: Frequently Asked Questions

These are sample questions a reporter might ask about why Equal Opportunity is important.

Question: Your group supports equal opportunity programs— why?

Answer: We support equal opportunity for communities that need it, because when communities prosper, we all benefit. We're in favor of initiatives that make it possible for all communities to succeed. We all benefit when we all successful because we're all in this together.

Question: Your opposition says they want a color-blind society. What's your problem with that? Isn't that your goal as well?

Answer: Color blindness implies that “race” is no more significant than than eye color. Its supporters insist that to treat people equally they must all be treated the same. The logic of this perspective hinges on the belief that we are all similarly situated across racial lines and that discrimination is a situation of the past.

Color blindness is not race-neutral. It does not ignore race, nor does it allow for people to be treated fairly and equitable. Color blindness fails to square with the lived reality of most people of color. Whether they are privileged, working class or living in conditions of poverty, race remains a significant factor that shapes access to everything from social networking to jobs to health care to housing.

Question: But isn't that what your opposition is asking for—equal opportunity for everyone to compete, regardless of race?

Answer: The reality is that anyone who has kids knows that some communities' school districts are better than others, and any homeowner knows that some neighborhoods get better services than others. Equal opportunity is about making sure that all communities get the same chance to succeed.

Question: How do you address criticisms that these programs are unfair and irrelevant?

Answer: In the U.S. access to the American Dream is often framed as a fair race in which the swiftest runners win. Critics say we should eliminate equal opportunity because it gives some runners an unfair head start in an otherwise fair race.

What if we begin with the observation that the lanes on the track used by the runners are fundamentally unequal? We all know that there are numerous obstacles that litter the lanes of disadvantaged runners: people of color find their path blocked by racial discrimination; poverty creates broken lanes filled with potholes and other dangers; women find their lanes will with impenetrable barriers. Meanwhile, those runners who aren't kept back by race, class, or gender discrimination are privileged to run a race in which their ability to compete is not impeded by any unwarranted arbitrary barriers.

In this light, equal opportunity represents nothing more than a set of policies designed to remove the numerous impediments that litter the lanes of those who are disadvantaged for reasons associated with their racial, gender or class backgrounds.

Question: What do you say when critics say equal opportunity initiatives are preferential treatment?

Answer: In this regard, it should be noted that virtually every effort to lift the burden of racial iniquities in American society has been denounced as a form of preferential treatment. Supporters of slavery resisted plans to free those held in bondage on the grounds that they unfairly took away the slaveholders' property interest in the slave and redistributed property to the slave. Even the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished involuntary servitude, was said by segregationists to compel them to behave in ways that were fundamentally unfair.

The deployment of the idea that race-based policies that serve to eliminate discriminatory practices somehow advantage their beneficiaries has long been a standard tactic on the part of those who seek to subvert programs designed to redress racial iniquities in the U.S. As such, anti-equal opportunity critics pay homage to Americans throughout history that have refused to provide fair opportunities to women and people of color on the grounds that such policies advantage women and minorities over the white male.