



**207 E. Buffalo Street, #325  
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5774**

**For Immediate Release: February 16, 2009**

**Contact: Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director, (414) 272-4032, ext. 13**

## **ACLU DEFENDS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OPPONENT'S RIGHT TO SPEAK AT UW MILWAUKEE – EVEN THOUGH HE'S DEAD WRONG**

Milwaukee – On Wednesday, Ward Connerly is scheduled to speak at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in another stop on his crusade against affirmative action. The Constitution allows people to speak their minds and Mr. Connerly has a right to speak his. Mr. Connerly is the man behind California Proposition 209, an anti-affirmative action referendum that passed in 1995.

The ACLU of Wisconsin and its ACLU Student Alliance (ACLUSA) at UWM believe that the best way to respond to Connerly is to counter his speech with more speech. While ACLUSA members may be in attendance to observe, the ACLU is urging students who may be offended by Connerly's position not to heckle or otherwise disrupt his speech. It does suggest that they let others know how wrong Connerly is on affirmative action.

Since 1995 Connerly has spent his time spreading myths about affirmative action. We'd like to clear some of those up in advance of his visit.

Inequality and unfairness still exist in America and we still need deliberate remedies to for everyone to have a fair chance.

Ideally, everyone in America would start out with an equal chance to succeed. Connerly falsely assumes this is the case when in fact, women and minorities continue to face discrimination in housing, poverty, glass ceilings, access to good schools, higher education and in the workplace. Others in society benefit from privileges like wealth and family connections, even parental literacy rates vary making some children less prepared for school and less likely to succeed in school as a result.

“Mr. Connerly would like people to believe that we have achieved some fictitious level of equality in America where white men are now the discriminated against as a class. Connerly wants us to believe that the reason people do or don’t succeed is purely in their will to do so. We disagree profoundly,” said Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director of the ACLU of Wisconsin.

Ahmuty continued, “In fact, affirmative action helps to offset barriers that unfairly block the pathways of qualified Americans who are fully able to succeed. In so doing, it promotes equal opportunity in an otherwise unequal society. Affirmative action benefits families, businesses, coworkers, communities, and our entire society. It is not a “quota” system, nor is it ‘preferential treatment’.”

“The inequality of race and gender at the highest levels of our society is just now beginning to crumble. Affirmative action is just now beginning to make a difference, hardly the time to call it quits on a program that is beginning to work,” he added.

“The ACLU is urging students to exercise their right to free speech in a non-disruptive fashion. We believe that our arguments are superior and will prevail,” concluded Ahmuty.

The ACLU of Wisconsin is a membership organization defending the civil liberties and rights of all Wisconsin residents.

###