Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against the current siege on affirmative action. In my home State of Texas, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals recently struck down affirmative action in admissions at the University of Texas Law School in Hopwood versus State of Texas. Then just this week, a Federal judge in Houston temporarily barred the Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority from considering race or sex as factors in awarding contracts. I am very concerned about this case, and I have just asked that the Department of Transportation investigate this decision and the impact it will have on funding for the Houston Metro.

Wy are we so quick to eradicate these programs, when it took so many years of struggle to even begin these programs? We should not act impulsively to abandon affirmative action. As long as there is discrimination based on race and gender, we must fashion remedies that take race and gender into account. Race- and gender-conscious remedies have proved essential and remain essential. All Americans want a color- or gender-blind society. That is our goal. But serious discrimination persists and we cannot ignore it.

In the Hopwood versus State of Texas case, the opinion suggested that affirmative action conflicts with merit-based admissions because of small differences in index ratings among nonminority and minority applicants. This is an incorrect definition of merit.

The president of Harvard University, Neil Rudenstine, has said: ''Standardized tests do not assess qualities such as competitiveness, decisiveness, creativity, or imagination.'' Standardized test scores should not be the sole criteria for admissions. The definition of merit should include an assessment of what each student would bring to the learning experience of classmates.

Having a racially and ethnically diverse student body produces benefits for the students, for educational institutions, and for society as a whole. The chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, one of the most highly regarded schools in the California system said ''Excellence and diversity are woven from the same cloth—they are inextricably linked.''

The former president of the University of Pennsylvania has said: ''The most compelling institutional interest in achieving diversity is the educational necessity of preparing students to live in an increasingly diverse society.'' Indeed, many students have benefited from affirmative action in education.

It is no accident that as recently as 1974 racial and ethnic minority groups constituted only 1 percent of the University of Texas Law School's student body, while the same groups constituted 30 percent of the State's population. Only a policy of ethnic and race-consciousness led to the 1995–96 presence at the law school of a 17-percent-minority population in a student body that is still 58 percent male and 75 percent white, despite the fact that the State's minority population now stands at 40 percent. Clearly, the school's policy of attempting to insure some degree of diversity, from which everyone benefits, in the student body has not denied, or even appreciably affected the basically white, mostly male character of the school.

The present law of the land for affirmative action in education is the Supreme Court's 1978 decision in Bakke versus Regents of the University of California. This decision established that a university, if it so chose, could employ race as one of the criteria to recruit and bring students of diverse backgrounds into its student population. This is a good rule which should not be rolled back.

I rise today to urge that we do not rush to tear down the affirmative action programs that have been essential in combating the pervasive discrimination that still exists in society today. Let us not roll back affirmative action just when we are beginning to see the benefits to society and business. A commitment to diversity in the work force is simply good business. Opening opportunities helps business compete in a global market and in a multicultural and multiethnic country such as ours.

We should not rush to scapegoat affirmative action as the cause of our economic problems. It is painfully ironic that affirmative action, which was put in place to correct the problems of discrimination, is now seen as a source of injustice. The appropriation of the language of the civil rights movement to now eliminate affirmative action is a perversion of the struggle for equality and justice that so many have fought so hard to begin. If we lose sight of the history of discrimination and injustice, we are doomed to repeat it.

The SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Oregon [Ms. FURSE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. FURSE. addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues and the representative of a large and vibrant community of Armenian-Americans, I rise to remember, to commemorate the Armenian genocide.

First, I would like to commend the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] and the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. PORTER], cochairs of the caucus, for all their hard work on this issue and other issues of human rights and international decency.

April 24, 1996, marks the 81st anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian genocide. It was on that day in 1915 that over 200 Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders were arrested and subsequently murdered in central Turkey.

This date marks the beginning of an organized campaign by the ''Young Turk'' government to eliminate the Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. Over the next 8 years, 1.5 million Armenians died at the hands of the Turks, and a half million more were deported.

This tragedy is the first genocide of the 20th century and is well documented. The New York Times alone ran over 194 articles during the Turkish atrocities.

As the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., has written: ''When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race. They understood this well and made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.''

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for Congress to put our government unequivocally on the side of the truth in this tragedy. I commend our colleagues, the gentleman from Michigan, DAVID BONIOR, and the gentleman from Massachusetts, PETER BLUTE, for introducing House Resolution 47, which I have cosponsored. This resolution not only represents official United States recognition of the memory of those who died, but will also put pressure on the Turkish government to do what it has so far callously refused to do: acknowledge and commemorate the atrocities committed over 81 years ago.

We must not condone Turkey's attempts at historical revisionism and denial of the Armenian genocide's occurrence.

Another issue of great importance to Armenia and Armenian-Americans is the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act. Mr. Speaker, I was in Greece several years ago and saw, firsthand, warehouses full of United States humanitarian aid destined Armenia which could not be sent because Turkey was refusing to allow its transport.

While the situation has improved, this hateful practice must not be permitted by this Congress. We have addressed the issue on a temporary basis in the 1996 foreign aid appropriations bill, which included a temporary Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act. We need to make this permanent.

Nothing we can do or say will bring those who perished back to life, but we can imbue their memories with everlasting meaning by teaching the lessons of the Armenian genocide to future generations.

Adolf Hitler, in 1939, cruelly justified the Holocaust with the haunting and hateful words, ''Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?''

My fellow Members, tonight we remember the Armenians. We speak for the Armenians, and by doing so we salute their indomitable spirit. By remembering the past, by honoring the Armenians' marthyrdom and sacrifice, we will hopefully prevent similar atrocities in the future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. ENGEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr.