



Senator Boxer lauds Palm Desert campus

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By MEGHAN LEWIT / The Press-Enterprise

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer on Monday praised the community efforts that brought a privately funded public university to the Coachella Valley, and offered a preview of comments she will make on the Senate floor opposing Senate Republican efforts to end judicial filibusters.

Following a tour of the Palm Desert campus of California State University, San Bernardino, Boxer, D-Calif., delivered brief remarks that touched on education and laid out her position on the politically charged issue of banning filibusters of judicial nominations.

"As a product of a state university system in New York state, I can tell you that I never would be where I am today or probably anywhere in the world ... if it wasn't for the fact that I got a free public education from kindergarten through college," Boxer said to a handful of university administrators and city leaders.

"I just think that it is an extraordinary contribution that you're all making to our state, to our families."

Calling the campus "critical" to the future of the Coachella Valley, Boxer said she was intrigued after hearing about the privately funded state university branch from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, who visited the campus last February.

Situated on 200 acres of city-donated land at the corner of Cook Street and Frank Sinatra Drive, the campus is considered to be one of the first public colleges in the nation to be built with no financial assistance from the state.

Boxer said she would do whatever she could at the federal level to help supporters obtain a grant for a planned health sciences program at the campus.

Boxer said it is a difficult time with so much money being used for military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It's very discouraging," she said.

"It's very disheartening to see hundreds of millions of dollars leave while we cry out for a \$1 million grant."

The outspoken third-term senator also criticized the "arrogance of power" of Republican senators who are seeking to ban filibusters of judicial nominations.

Rules in place for more than 200 years allow the minority party to prevent Senate action with 41 votes.

Sixty votes are needed to end the debate.

The Senate has approved 208, or 95 percent, of President Bush's judicial nominees, Boxer said. Minority Democrats have used the filibuster to block confirmation votes on 10 nominees who are viewed as being too far out of the mainstream, said Boxer, who will make her case on the Senate floor Tuesday.



Amanda Lucidon / The Press-Enterprise
Sen. Barbara Boxer called the Cal State San Bernardino Palm Desert campus critical to the future of the Coachella Valley.

"I urge you to call it out to your students," she said Monday.

"Our Constitution now is being tested."

Campus Dean Fred Jandt said the visits by prominent figures such as Kennedy and Boxer are a testament to the impact the school hopes to have on the Coachella Valley.

"That she took the time (to visit) is an important endorsement," Jandt said.

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