# **Primary Sources: Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Original legislation from the U.S. Congress, adapted by Newsela staff

*Editor's Note: This act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. It made discrimination in public places unlawful. It required schools and other public places to be integrated. It made job discrimination unlawful. This document was the most far-reaching civil rights legislation since the Reconstruction Era. This period followed the Civil War and was meant to help reunite the North and South. Excerpted here are the most important parts of the legislation.*

**AN ACT**

This act is to enforce the constitutional right to vote.

It is to grant official power for making legal judgments in the district courts of the United States. It will require individuals to stop discriminating by using a court order.

The act will allow the Attorney General, or head of the U.S. Justice Department, to protect constitutional rights in public buildings.

It will increase the power of the Commission on Civil Rights.

The act will prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs.

It will create a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity.

This act will be called the “Civil Rights Act of 1964.”

**TITLE I — VOTING RIGHTS**

(2) Nobody acting under the law may —

(A) use different rules, practices, or methods for different individuals when registering them to vote.

(B) deny an individual the right to vote because of an error when applying or registering. The error must not determine voter qualification.

(C) give a knowledge test to vote in any election. Exceptions occur if the test is assigned to everyone and done entirely through writing. There must also be a copy of the test and answers provided within 25 days.

**TITLE II — NO DISCRIMINATION IN PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION**

SEC. 201. (a) Everyone may be granted full and equal enjoyment of goods, services, equipment, and privileges in public places.

(b) Each of the following establishments could be considered a public place:

(1) any inn, hotel, motel, or other place which provides lodging to guest.

(2) any restaurant, cafeteria or other place where food is sold and consumed on premise.

(3) any movie theater, theater, concert hall, sports arena, stadium or other place of entertainment.

**TITLE III — DESEGREGATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES**

SEC. 301. (a) The Attorney General may respond when a person complains of unequal treatment. This can be because of race, color, religion, or national origin.This includes not being allowed use of a public building.

If the Attorney General believes the complaint has merit, he is authorized to take legal action. This will happen in a district court. The court may make legal decisions according to this section.

**TITLE VI — NONDISCRIMINATION IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

SEC. 601. No person may be denied benefits or be discriminated against under any program receiving help from the government. This includes programs like health care for the poor or elderly.

**TITLE VII — EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

—SEC. 703. (a) Based on race, color, religion, gender, or ethnicity, it is unlawful for an employer —

(1) to refuse to hire or fire any individual. It is also unlawful to separate any individual from the rest of the team. It is unlawful to pay someone of a different race, gender, religion or ethnicity less than someone else with equal skills and ability. It is also against the law to treat them differently at work or to not give them the same privileges.

(2) to limit or separate employees. This includes denying opportunities or negatively impacting employment.

(b) It may be unlawful for an employment agency to refuse to recommend a job to someone based on these things.

(c) It may be unlawful for a labor organization—

(1) to ban membership or separate individuals.

(2) to limit or refuse to refer any individual in a way which limits employment opportunities or negatively influences employment.

(3) to be prejudiced against an individual in violation of this section.

(d) It is unlawful for any apprenticeship or training program to be prejudiced against any individual.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

A group will be created called the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The commission will be composed of five members. They will be chosen by the President. The committee members will be advised by lawmakers in the Senate.

**TITLE VIII — REGISTRATION AND VOTING**

SEC. 801. The Secretary of Commerce will conduct a survey. The survey will be a collection of voting numbers in certain areas. These places will be recommended by the Commission on Civil Rights. The survey will include a count of persons of voting age by race, color, national origin, and voter standing. It is to make sure that this act is being followed.

No person needs to make his race, color, or national origin known. If questioned about his political party affiliation or how he voted, he may refuse to answer. Every person questioned has the right to refuse to answer.

1. **Which of the following answer choices BEST describes the main ideas of the Civil Rights Act?**

**A** The Civil Rights Act will increase the power of the Attorney General and the Commission on Civil Rights. The Attorney General may take legal action in a district court.

**B** The Civil Rights Act is intended to enforce the right to vote. Surveys of voters will be done in order to ensure that this is happening, though people do not have to answer questions.

**C** The Civil Rights Act is the largest civil rights legislation in almost 100 years. It is being created because laws are very different for men and women and this is not fair.

**D** The Civil Rights Act is intended to stop discrimination in many aspects of public life, such as applying for a job or voting. People cannot be treated unfairly based on race, color, religion, gender or ethnicity.

1. **Which answer choice BEST gives the main idea of the section "TITLE I — VOTING RIGHTS"?**

**A** Everyone must have equal rights to vote without unfair rules or restrictions.

**B** A test may not be given to voters unless specific requirements are met.

**C** The most important part of the Civil Rights Act was to enforce the constitutional right to vote.

**D** Citizens may not be denied the right to vote unless they make errors when applying or registering.

1. **Read the introduction [paragraph 1].**

**Which phrase from this paragraph MOST clearly expresses that the Civil Rights Act made rules about many different aspects of discrimination?**

**A** signed into law

**B** other public places

**C** most far-reaching

**D** to help reunite

1. **Read the section "TITLE III — DESEGREGATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES."**

**In the following sentence from this section, what is meant by "complaint has merit"?**

If the Attorney General believes the complaint has merit, he is authorized to take legal action.

**A** A person has been treated fairly according to the law.

**B** A person has been treated unequally according to the law.

**C** The Attorney General feels bad for a person who has complained about a law.

**D** The Attorney General wants to tell someone to stop complaining about a situation.