

A Selected Civil Rights Timeline

Race / Omnibus

- 1857 – Supreme Court upholds Runaway Slave Law in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*
- 1859 – John Brown executed following anti-slavery raid on Harpers Ferry armory
- 1863 – President Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation
- 1865 – 13th Amendment abolishes slavery
- 1868 – 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection and due process of law to all Americans
- 1870 – 15th Amendment guarantees right to vote regardless of race
- 1896 – Supreme Court upholds “separate but equal” doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- 1947 – Brooklyn Dodgers’ Jackie Robinson desegregates Major League Baseball
- 1948 – President Truman issues executive order desegregating armed forces
- 1954 – Supreme Court holds segregated public schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Ed.*
- 1955 - Murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi; Rosa Parks sparks Montgomery, AL bus boycott
- 1957 – President Eisenhower employs federal troops to desegregate Little Rock, AR schools
- 1960 – Student sit-ins in N. Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia pace gathering civil rights movement
- 1961 – 23rd Amendment grants DC presidential vote; Freedom Riders challenge bus segregation
- 1963 – Civil Rights March on Washington; Medgar Evers murdered in Mississippi; four Black children killed in Birmingham church bombing; President Kennedy federalizes Alabama National Guard following Gov. Wallace’s obstruction of U. of Alabama desegregation
- 1964 – Landmark Civil Rights Act bars discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and federal programs; Supreme Court upholds 1964 Civil Rights Act in *Heart of Atlanta v. McClung*; 24th Amendment outlaws poll taxes; civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner murdered in Mississippi
- 1965 – Alabama State Troopers violently attack voting rights demonstrators in Selma; Voting Rights Act gives federal government broad powers to enforce right to vote.
- 1967 – In *Reitman v. Mulkey*, Supreme Court invalidates state referendum legalizing discrimination, and overturns state ban on interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia*
- 1968 – Martin Luther King assassinated in Memphis; Fair Housing Act bars discrimination in sale, rental, and advertising of housing
- 1971 – Supreme Court bars hiring criteria with discriminatory effects in *Griggs v. Duke Power*
- 1974 – In *Milliken v. Bradley*, Supreme Court limits school desegregation orders to one district

2007 – Supreme Court prohibits use of race to achieve diversity in public schools in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*

2009 – Inauguration of Barack Obama as first minority president

2013 – Supreme Court invalidates Voting Rights Act’s restrictions on voting changes with potential discriminatory effects in *Shelby County v. Holder*

2016 – In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, Supreme Court permits consideration of race as one factor in higher education admissions

2020 – George Floyd killed by Minneapolis Police, unleashing nationwide “Black Lives Matter” protests

Gender

1920 – 19th Amendment grants vote to women

1971 – Supreme Court invalidates state law preferring males as executors of estates, due to lack of rational basis, in *Reed v. Reed*

1972 – Title IX of Education Amendments bars sex discrimination in federally-assisted educational programs

1973 – In *Roe v. Wade*, Supreme Court invalidates state prohibition of abortion

1977 – National Women’s Conference in Houston promulgates women’s rights agenda

1980 – Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issues regulations on sexual harassment

1993 – Family & Medical Leave Act grants 12 weeks unpaid leave for child and medical care

1994 – Violence Against Women Act provides services for victims of domestic violence

1996 – Supreme Court rules Virginia Military Institute must admit women

2007 – Nancy Pelosi sworn in as first female Speaker of the House

2009 – Lilly Ledbetter Act extends time for filing employment sex discrimination lawsuits

2016 – Hillary Clinton is first female major party presidential nominee

2017 – Women’s March on Mall in Washington

2020 – In *June Medical Services v. Russo*, Supreme Court holds state law requiring hospital privileges for providers of abortion services to be unduly burdensome

LGBT

- 1969 – Stonewall protests in New York City, following police harassment of gay establishments
- 1996 – Supreme Court overturns state referendum which legalized discrimination on basis of sexual orientation in *Romer v. Evans*
- 2003 – In *Lawrence v. Texas*, Supreme Court prohibits criminalization of homosexuality
- 2009 – Shepard-Byrd Act extends federal hate crimes protection to LGBT victims
- 2013 – In *U.S. v. Windsor*, Supreme Court invalidates Defense of Marriage Act, which permitted states to refuse recognition of same-sex marriage from another state
- 2015 – Supreme Court holds states must permit same-sex marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*
- 2020 – In *Bostock v. Clayton County*, Supreme Court rules 1964 Civil Rights Act’s employment discrimination provisions cover LGBT persons.

National Origin

- 1954 – In *Hernandez v. Texas*, Supreme Court holds that 14th Amendment entitles Mexican Americans and other ethnic groups to equal protection of the laws
- 1965 – Immigration and Naturalization Act abolishes national origin-based immigration quotas; California farm workers initiate strike and boycott supporting union organization
- 1972 – Federal Appeals Court rules that Hispanic students have right to attend desegregated schools, in *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District*
- 1974 – In *Lau v. Nichols*, Supreme Court requires public schools to provide bilingual instruction for non-native English-speaking students
- 1982 – Supreme Court, in *Plyler v. Doe*, holds public schools may not deny education to undocumented immigrant children
- 1988 – Civil Liberties Act grants reparations to Japanese American World War II internees
- 2020 – In *Dept. of Homeland Security v. Regents of University of California*, Supreme Court invalidates executive order terminating Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, and affirms Creek Indian Nation’s independence from state judicial authority in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.

Religion

- 1789 - 6th Amendment prohibits any religious test for public office
- 1790 – President Washington assures Hebrew Congregation of Newport, RI of religious freedom
- 1791 - 1st Amendment guarantees free exercise of religion

1961 – John F. Kennedy inaugurated as first Catholic president

1963 – In *Sherbert v. Verner*, Supreme Court holds employer may not restrict employee's religious rights (refusal to work on sabbath) absent showing of compelling state interest

1993 – Supreme Court, in *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah*, holds First Amendment protects all religions (animal sacrifice practiced by Santeria).

Disability

1933 – Franklin D. Roosevelt inaugurated: first physically-disabled President

1973 – Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act bars discrimination against persons with disabilities in federal programs

1990 – Americans With Disabilities Act extends protection to private sector

1998 – Supreme Court, in *Bragdon v. Abbott*, holds that Americans With Disabilities Act protects HIV positive persons

1999 – In *Olmstead v. L.C.*, Supreme Court prohibits segregation of mentally disabled individuals from general community

Age

1967 – Age Discrimination in Employment Act bars discrimination against older employees; Supreme Court extends Bill of Rights protection to juvenile defendants in *In re Gault*

1971 – 26th Amendment lowers voting age to 18

