



ACTS IN U.S. HISTORY

Year	Act	Brief Description
1649	Act of Toleration	Act proposed by Cecilius Calvert (Lord Baltimore) to allow for toleration of both Protestants and Catholics in Maryland
1662	Halfway Covenant	Act loosening the requirements for church membership in Puritan Massachusetts. The act was passed in response to a drop in church attendance amongst second generation Puritans.
1763	Proclamation of 1763	Act passed by British Parliament restricting colonial settlement to land east of the Appalachian Mountains. The act was passed in response to clashes with Indians (notably Pontiac's War) as colonists moved west into land acquired from France after the French and Indian War.
1765	Stamp Act	Direct Tax placed on the American colonies by British Parliament. The act required colonists to purchase stamps for a variety of printed material. The uproar over the act led to the Stamp Act Congress, one of the first organized protests of British taxation policy.
1767	Townshend Acts	Series of revenue-producing taxes placed on the American colonies by Britain in an attempt to pay for continued occupation of the colonies by British troops. The act taxed items like lead, paint, glass, paper, and tea.
1774	Intolerable Acts	Series of four acts designed to punish the city of Boston for the damage caused by the Boston Tea Party. The British refer to the acts as the "Coercive Acts"
1774	Quebec Act	While not intended as such, many American colonists considered this to be one of the Intolerable Acts. The act established Catholicism as the official religion of Quebec, and expanded Quebec to include territory that today makes up Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota

1785	Land Ordinance	Passed by the Article of Confederation Congress, this act established an orderly method for surveying and selling western land of the early U.S. Notably, the act divided the land into six square mile “townships” that were further subdivided into homesteads.
1787	Northwest Ordinance	Also passed by the Articles of Confederation Congress, this act established the method by which new territory could join the union as states.
1798	Alien and Sedition Acts	A series of acts sponsored by the Federalists imposing severe restrictions on aliens out of fear of treason. The acts were an attempt to limit the power of Jefferson’s Democratic-Republican Party
1807	Embargo Act	Essentially forbade US maritime trade with foreign nations. This was signed by Jefferson in order to maintain American neutrality during the Napoleonic Wars. The Embargo was opposed by New England Federalists.
1809	Non-Intercourse Act	Repealed the Embargo Act with regards to all nations except France and Britain
1820	Missouri Compromise	Also known as the Compromise of 1820, it admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state, thus preserving sectional balance. It also set the southern border of Missouri (36° 30’) as the future border between slave and free states. This provision was ruled unconstitutional by the <i>Dred Scott</i> decision of 1857.
1828	Tariff of 1828	Also known as the “Tariff of Abominations”, opposition to this act led to the Nullification Crisis, the resignation of John C. Calhoun as VP, and the writing of the <i>South Carolina Exposition and Protest</i> .
1830	Indian Removal Act	Andrew Jackson’s forcible removal of the Five Civilized Tribes from the South (particularly the Cherokee from Georgia). Most of the Indians were removed via the Trail of Tears. The act was a direct response to the 1828 case of <i>Cherokee Nation v. Georgia</i> and was later challenged with the 1832 case of <i>Worcester v. Georgia</i> ..
1850	Compromise of 1850	Series of five laws intended to compromise on the issue of slavery in the lands acquired after the Mexican War. California was admitted as a free state, the slave trade was ended in the District of Columbia, and the North agreed to a stricter Fugitive Slave Law.
1854	Kansas-Nebraska Act	Provided for the admission of Kansas and Nebraska with or without slavery; essentially repealed the Missouri Compromise (1820)

1862	Homestead Act	Provided for the distribution of western lands to US citizens. Homesteaders were given 160 acres of free land in exchange for a pledge to “improve” the land within five years.
1864	Wade-Davis Bill	Radical Reconstruction plan passed by Congressional Republicans but later vetoed by Lincoln. The plan called for 50% of citizens of reconstructed states to take an Ironclad Oath swearing that they never supported the Confederacy. This was a challenge to Lincoln’s more lenient 10% Plan.
1868	Tenure of Office Act	Prohibited the president from removing officials properly appointed by the Senate. Andrew Johnson violated this by firing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, leading to his impeachment.
1878	Bland-Allison Act	Required the Treasury to monthly, limited purchases of silver for coinage. Congress was required to purchase between \$2 and \$4 Million worth of silver. The act was later replaced by the 1890 Sherman Silver Purchase Act.
1882	Chinese Exclusion Act	A reversal of the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, this act prohibited the immigration from China.
1883	Pendleton Act	Provided for the objective appointment of civil service positions on the basis of merit. The Pendleton Act was sparked by the assassination of James Garfield by disappointed office seeker Charles Guiteau.
1887	Interstate Commerce Act	Created the Interstate Commerce Commission and forced all railway charges to be fair and reasonable. The act’s passage was a response to protests from farmer’s groups like The Grange.
1890	Sherman Antitrust Act	Authorized the federal government to dissolve a trust. The act was weak, and was even used to restrict the power of labor unions. The Sherman Antitrust Act was strengthened by the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914.
1890	Sherman Silver Purchase Act	Replaced the Bland-Allison Act; required the treasury to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver at market value per month
1900	Foraker Act	Established the government of the newly acquired territory of Puerto Rico. The <i>Insular Cases</i> declared that citizenship was not automatically bestowed upon people in newly acquired territories, and it wasn’t until the 1917 Jones Act that Puerto Ricans gained U.S. citizenship

1906	Pure Food and Drug Act	Forbade the manufacture, sale, or transportation of "adulterated" or mislabeled foods or drugs in interstate commerce. This was a direct response to Upton Sinclair's <i>The Jungle</i> .
1906	Meat Inspection Act	Aimed to eliminate the dangerous and unsanitary conditions in the meat-packing industry. This was a direct response to Upton Sinclair's <i>The Jungle</i> .
1914	Clayton Antitrust Act	Strengthened the Sherman Antitrust Act, was more specific as to what actions constituted a "trust". Samuel Gompers called the act the "Magna Carta of organized labor" because it removed the restrictions on labor unions put into place by the Sherman Antitrust Act.
1917	Espionage Act	Provided severe penalties for persons found guilty of aiding the enemy or refusal to serve in the US military. Charles Schenck's violation of this law was the subject of the 1919 case of <i>Schenck v. US</i> .
1919	Volstead Act	Provided for the enforcement of the 18th Amendment (Prohibition)
1924	Adjusted Compensation Act	Provided for the payment of adjusted compensation (bonus) to all veterans of WWI. It was payment of this bonus that the Bonus Army was after when they marched on Washington in 1931.
1930	Hawley-Smoot Tariff	Sharp increase of tariff rates on more than 20,000 imported goods. President Hoover thought that this would alleviate the pains of the Great Depression, but most economists blame the Hawley-Smoot Tariff with sinking the U.S. deeper into the Depression.
1932	Reconstruction Finance Corporation	An attempt by Herbert Hoover to address the problems of the Great Depression by giving billions of dollars in loans to banks and businesses. The act was criticized because it did not give direct relief to the poor.
1932	Norris-LaGuardia Act	Also known as the "Anti-Injunction Act", it barred federal courts from issuing injunctions to halt labor disputes. The act also outlawed the "yellow-dog contract".
1933	National Industrial Recovery Act	Created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). The NIRA was later ruled unconstitutional in the 1935 case of <i>Schechter Poultry v. U.S.</i>

1933	Federal Emergency Relief Act	Created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to aid the states through grants
1933	Agricultural Adjustment Act	Established the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) which paid farmers subsidies to farm less land and therefore drive crop prices up.
1933	Glass-Steagall Act	Created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) for guaranteeing individual bank deposits
1935	Wagner Act	Also known as the National Labor Relations Act, created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)
1941	Lend-Lease Act	Enabled any country whose defense is deemed necessary to the nation to acquire arms and other war supplies from the US. This arrangement to help the UK during the Battle of Britain followed the earlier "Cash and Carry" and Destroyers for Bases" programs.
1947	Taft-Hartley Act	Passed over Truman's veto, this act heavily restricted the actions of Unions including banning the "closed shop" and forbidding union contributions to political campaigns. Allowed the federal government to apply for injunctions to stop strikes.
1947	National Security Act	Combined all military departments into a single department, Defense. James Forrestal was the first Secretary of Defense
1964	Civil Rights Act	Among other provisions, it outlawed discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, or sex. It created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to investigate claims of discrimination.
1965	Voting Rights Act	Eliminated literacy and other tests as requirements for voting
1970	Occupational Safety and Health Act	(OSHA) mandated that employers provide employment "free from recognized hazards to employees"

1973	War Powers Act	Set a sixty day limit on the presidential commitment of troops to hostilities abroad without Congressional approval. Passed over Nixon's veto, the act is considered by many to be a reaction to LBJ's actions with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.
1985	Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act	Required Congress to balance the budget.
2002	McCain-Feingold Act	Regulates campaign financing. Specifically, it targets "soft money" contributions and "issue ads" not financed by a specific candidate.