

FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

TEXT SUMMARY

From the 1870s to the late 1950s, Congress passed no civil rights legislation. Since then, much has been passed. One of the strongest was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It says that everyone, regardless of race, color, religion, or national origin, is free to use “public accommodations” such as hotels and restaurants. It also prohibits discrimination—in the workplace and in any program receiving federal funding—based on the reasons above or physical disability, age, or gender. The

Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibits discrimination in the selling or leasing of housing.

In the 1960s, the Federal Government also began **affirmative action**—a

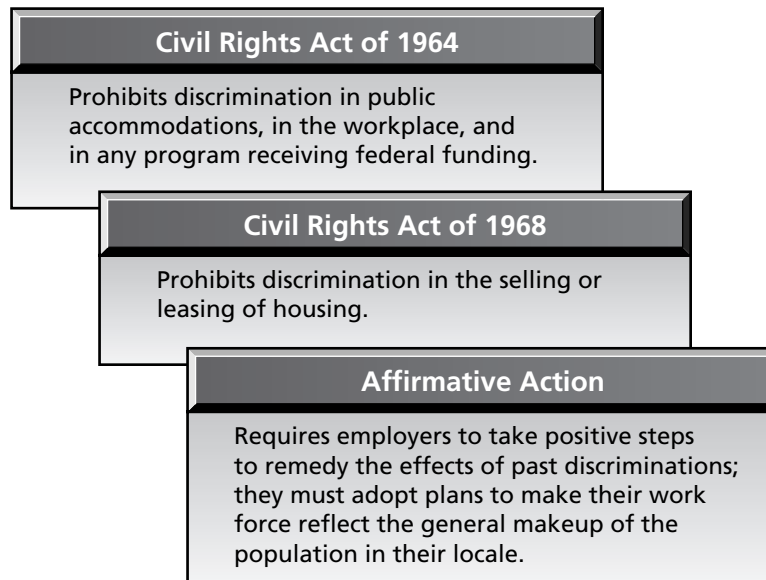
policy requiring employers to take positive steps to remedy the effects of past discrimination. An employer must make its work force reflect the general makeup of the population in its locale and correct inequalities in pay, promotions, and benefits. Rules that call for certain numbers of jobs or promotions to be kept for certain groups are called **quotas**. Affirmative action applies to all government offices and all businesses that work with the government.

Affirmative action has been criticized for being **reverse discrimination**, or discrimination against the majority group. Supporters and critics of the policy have taken their arguments to the Supreme Court, State legislatures, and the voting booth, where the debate continues.

THE BIG IDEA

Federal laws passed in the 1950s and 1960s began the challenge against long-standing discrimination.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Key Federal Civil Rights Laws



The civil rights movement has led to the passage of civil rights acts and affirmative action policies.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of affirmative action?
2. **Chart Skills** What law forbids housing discrimination?