

GOP: On the Right Side of History



President Eisenhower signs 1957 Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1957, a federal voting rights bill, was the first federal civil rights legislation passed by the United States Congress since the Civil Rights Act of 1875. Its purpose was to show the federal government's support for racial equality after the US Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Following the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown*, which eventually led to the integration, also called desegregation, of public schools, Southern Democrats began a campaign of "Massive Resistance". Violence against blacks rose; in Little Rock, Arkansas where President Dwight D. Eisenhower had to order in federal troops to protect nine children integrating into a public school, the first time the US federal government ordered troops in the South since the Reconstruction era. There had been continued physical assaults against suspected activists and bombings of schools and churches in the South. The Eisenhower administration proposed legislation to protect blacks' right to vote.

The bill passed 285-126 in the House of Representatives with a majority of both parties' support (Republicans 167-19, Democrats 118-107). It then passed 72-18 in the Senate, again with a majority of both parties (Republicans 43-0, Democrats 29-18).

Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the bill on September 9, 1957. (Source: Wikipedia)