

Key Congressional Legislation

YEAR	KEY CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION	IDENTIFICATION
1789	Judiciary Act	Congress established federal judiciary
1798	Alien & Sedition Act	President can imprison/deport considered dangerous; made it a crime to publish criticism against the government
1883	Pendleton Act	Attempted to eliminated spoils by creating merit base system for federal jobs; included civil service exam and Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
1935	Social Security Act	Social insurance program funded through payroll tax; covered unemployment insurance initially, but now retirement, disability, and death
1935	Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Social Security Act)	Federal program that gave per child payments to families below a certainly mean level
1939	Hatch Act	Prohibits federal employees from taking an active role in politics (ex: fund raising at work, running for office, etc.)
1964	Civil Rights Act of 1964	Banned discrimination in public facilities and voter registration
1965	Medicare Act	National health insurance program for the elderly and disabled
1965	Voting Rights Act	Outlawed literacy tests, federal officials register new voters
1965	Medicaid (Title XIX of Social Security Act)	Joint federal/state program that provides medical benefits for low-income persons
1966	Freedom of Information Act	FOIA forced the federal government to make most public records accessible to citizens; some limits remain ex: documents re: national security
1970	Clean Air Act	Requires the EPA to develop and enforce regulations to protect the general public from exposure to airborne contaminants that are known to be hazardous to human health.
1973	War Powers Resolution	Attempt to limit President's power to wage war without approval from Congress; President must remove US armed forces within 60 days (up to 90 days for withdrawal) if Congress has not declared war or passed a joint resolution in support of the action.
1974	Budget & Impoundment Control Act	Reforms the federal budget process so that Congress has more input; President may not impound or rescind funds without Congressional approval
1974	Federal Election Campaign Act	Hard money contributions limited to \$1000 by individuals, \$5000 by PACs; unregulated "soft money" contributions unintended consequence.
1974	Title IX	Gender equity in educational programs including athletics.
1986	Gramm-Rudmann Budget Act	Congress established a procedure to gradually reduce the federal deficit to 0; established ceiling limits, then across-the-board cuts in discretionary spending to take place automatically starting w/ Defense.; entitlement spending exempt from caps

1986	Immigration Reform & Control Act	Criminalized the act of knowingly hiring an undocumented worker and established financial and other penalties for those employing illegal aliens
1989	Whistleblower Protection Act	Makes it for federal employees to report wrong doing on part of their boss or agency without retribution
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act	Requires employers, schools, & public bldgs. To reasonably accommodate physical needs of the handicapped w/ appropriate facilities
1991	Civil Rights Act of 1991	Guarantees jury trial and possibility of damages against employers in discrimination cases
1993	North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)	Called for dramatic reductions of tariffs among the US, Canada & Mexico; criticized by labor unions, etc. that jobs would move south to Mexico where labor is cheaper
1993	Family Medical Leave Act	Gave unpaid emergency medical leave for employees w/ a guarantee they will not lose their job interim (includes maternity and paternity leave)
1993	Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act	Required 5 day waiting period on firearm purchases & mandated criminal background checks by dealers
1993	Motor Voter Act	Enables people to register to vote at motor vehicle departments
1996	Defense of Marriage Act a.k.a. D.O.M.A.	States may deny "marriage like arrangements" (ex: civil unions) recognized in other states; defines marriage for federal purposes as union between 1 man & 1woman
1996	Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Act (a.k.a. Welfare Reform Act)	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) - replaced AFDC; partially paid for by block grants to the states; requires mean test; 2 yr. limit on receiving benefits;
2001	USA Patriot Act	Expands authority of US law enforcement for purpose of fighting terrorism (ex: expands FBI electronic surveillance capabilities; foreign student monitoring program)
2002	No Child Left Behind Act	Increases standards of accountability for states and public schools; provide parents more flexibility in choosing schools
2004	Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) a.k.a. McCain-Feingold	Bans "soft money" in political campaigns; increases hard \$ contributions to \$2000/candidate/election, \$10,000 to national party committees
2009	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act a.k.a. The Recovery Act or The Stimulus	Economic stimulus package to save and create jobs, provide temporary relief programs for those most impacted by the recession and invest in infrastructure, education, health, and renewable energy
2010	Affordable Care Act a.k.a. "Obamacare"	Requires insurance companies to cover all applicants and offer the same rates regardless of pre-existing conditions or sex, increased competition, regulation, and incentives to streamline the delivery of healthcare.