

<p>Fourteenth Amendment</p> <p>Urged on by the Radicals in 1866, Congress proposed a new bill. It would give the Freedmen's Bureau more powers. The law would allow the Freedmen's Bureau to use military courts to try people accused of violating African Americans' rights. The bill's supporters hoped that these courts would be fairer than local courts in the South.</p>	
<p>Johnson versus Congress</p> <p>To the surprise of many in Congress, Johnson vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau Bill. He insisted that Congress could not pass any new laws until the southern states were represented in Congress. Johnson also argued that the Freedmen's Bureau was unconstitutional.</p> <p>Republicans responded with the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This act provided African Americans with the same legal rights as white Americans. President Johnson once again used his veto power. He argued that the act gave too much power to the federal government. He also rejected the principle of equal rights for African Americans. Congress, however, overrode Johnson's veto.</p>	
<p>Many Republicans worried about what would happen when the southern states were readmitted. Fearing that the Civil Rights Act might be overturned, the Republicans proposed the Fourteenth Amendment in the summer of 1866. The Fourteenth Amendment included the following provisions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It defined all people born or naturalized within the United States, except Native Americans, as citizens. 2. It guaranteed citizens the equal protection of the laws. 3. It said that states could not "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." 4. It banned many former Confederate officials from holding state or federal offices. 5. It made state laws subject to federal court review. 6. It gave Congress the power to pass any laws needed to enforce it. 	
<p>1866 Elections</p> <p>President Johnson and most Democrats opposed the Fourteenth Amendment. As a result, civil rights for African Americans became a key issue in the 1866 congressional elections. To help the Democrats, Johnson traveled around the country defending his Reconstruction plan. Johnson's speaking tour was a disaster. It did little to win votes for the Democratic Party. Johnson even got into arguments with people in the audiences of some of his speaking engagements.</p> <p>Two major riots in the South also hurt Johnson's campaign. On May 1, 1866, a dispute in Memphis, Tennessee, took place between local police and black Union soldiers. The dispute turned into a three-day wave of violence against African Americans. About three months later, another riot took place during a political demonstration in New Orleans. During that dispute, 34 African Americans and three white Republicans were killed.</p>	

<p>Congress Takes Control of Reconstruction</p> <p>The 1866 elections gave the Republican Party a commanding two-thirds majority in both the House and the Senate. This majority gave the Republicans the power to override any presidential veto. In addition, the Republicans became united as the moderates joined with the Radicals. Together, they called for a new form of Reconstruction.</p>	
<p>Reconstruction Acts</p> <p>In March 1867, Congress passed the first of several Reconstruction Acts. These laws divided the South into five districts. A U.S. military commander controlled each district.</p> <p>“The military would remain in control of the South until the southern states rejoined the Union. To be readmitted, a state had to write a new state constitution supporting the Fourteenth Amendment. Finally, the state had to give African American men the right to vote.” - <i>Thaddeus Stevens was one of the new Reconstruction Acts’ most enthusiastic supporters. He spoke in Congress to defend the acts.</i></p> <p>“Have not loyal blacks quite as good a right to choose rulers and make laws as rebel whites? Every man, no matter what his race or color... has an equal right to justice, honesty, and fair play with every other man; and the law should secure him those rights.”</p> <p>–Thaddeus Stevens, quoted in <i>Sources of the American Republic</i>, edited by Marvin Meyers et al.</p>	
<p>President on Trial</p> <p>President Johnson strongly disagreed with Stevens. He argued that African Americans did not deserve the same treatment as white people. The Reconstruction Acts, he said, used “powers not granted to the federal government or any one of its branches.” Knowing that Johnson did not support its Reconstruction policies, Congress passed a law limiting his power. This law prevented the president from removing cabinet officials without Senate approval. Johnson quickly broke the law by firing Edwin Stanton, the secretary of war.</p> <p>For the first time in United States history, the House of Representatives responded by voting to impeach the president. Impeachment is the process used by a legislative body to bring charges of wrongdoing against a public official. The next step, under Article I of the Constitution, was a trial in the Senate. A two-thirds majority was required to find Johnson guilty and remove him from office.</p> <p>Although Johnson was unpopular with Republicans, some of them believed he was being judged unfairly. Others did not trust the president pro tempore of the Senate, Benjamin Wade. He would become president if Johnson were removed from office. By a single vote, Senate Republicans failed to convict Johnson. Even so, the trial weakened his power as president.</p>	

