

Fair Housing Makes U.S. Stronger

Fair Housing: Promises of a Century

For REALTORS®, the Fair Housing Act is one of our nation's most significant laws guiding the real estate industry today. Usually we recognize it with Fair Housing Month, celebrated in April each year. 2018 is different, though, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of this major milestone in our nation's efforts to bring greater equal opportunities in the rights to private property and housing.

When he signed the Fair Housing Act into law on April 11, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson noted that the bill would help fulfill "the promises of a century." He referred to another law enacted just over 100 years earlier, the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which declared "That all persons born in the United States [...] are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States; and such citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude [...] shall have the same right, in every State and Territory in the United States, to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property ..."

Despite the language and spirit of the law, the intervening century provided countless examples of laws and events that contradicted this early declaration of equality, including the right to buy, sell and own homes and other real property. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 itself specifically excluded Native Americans and immigrants from its definition of "all persons." California, Oregon, Minnesota and other states enacted laws restricting or prohibiting immigrants from China and other Asian countries from owning land. Cities and towns across the country often used covenants as part of property deeds to restrict who could purchase and live in a particular place, effectively creating neighborhoods from which African Americans and other groups were banned.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 became the nation's definitive law granting everyone equal access to housing, no matter their ethnicity, nationality, religion, handicap or familial status. As President Johnson plainly explained: "It proclaims that fair housing for all — all human beings who live in this country — is now a part of the American way of life."

Read more at <https://www.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2018-FHAC-January-Article.pdf>

Join NAR's commemoration of the Fair Housing Act. Watch the video at the link below to learn about the law, how it makes our industry and country stronger, and the work that is still to be done. All members of the REALTOR® family are asked to join with NAR in this commemoration and stand together in this commitment. To watch the video and for more information and resources, visit <https://www.nar.realtor/fair-housing/fair-housing-makes-us-stronger-commemorating-50-years-of-the-fair-housing-act>.