

Executive Order 14281—Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy
April 23, 2025

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Purpose. A bedrock principle of the United States is that all citizens are treated equally under the law. This principle guarantees equality of opportunity, not equal outcomes. It promises that people are treated as individuals, not components of a particular race or group. It encourages meritocracy and a colorblind society, not race- or sex-based favoritism. Adherence to this principle is essential to creating opportunity, encouraging achievement, and sustaining the American Dream.

But a pernicious movement endangers this foundational principle, seeking to transform America's promise of equal opportunity into a divisive pursuit of results preordained by irrelevant immutable characteristics, regardless of individual strengths, effort, or achievement. A key tool of this movement is disparate-impact liability, which holds that a near insurmountable presumption of unlawful discrimination exists where there are any differences in outcomes in certain circumstances among different races, sexes, or similar groups, even if there is no facially discriminatory policy or practice or discriminatory intent involved, and even if everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Disparate-impact liability all but requires individuals and businesses to consider race and engage in racial balancing to avoid potentially crippling legal liability. It not only undermines our national values, but also runs contrary to equal protection under the law and, therefore, violates our Constitution.

On a practical level, disparate-impact liability has hindered businesses from making hiring and other employment decisions based on merit and skill, their needs, or the needs of their customers because of the specter that such a process might lead to disparate outcomes, and thus disparate-impact lawsuits. This has made it difficult, and in some cases impossible, for employers to use bona fide job-oriented evaluations when recruiting, which prevents job seekers from being paired with jobs to which their skills are most suited—in other words, it deprives them of opportunities for success. Because of disparate-impact liability, employers cannot act in the best interests of the job applicant, the employer, and the American public.

Disparate-impact liability imperils the effectiveness of civil rights laws by mandating, rather than proscribing, discrimination. As the Supreme Court put it, "[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race."

Disparate-impact liability is wholly inconsistent with the Constitution and threatens the commitment to merit and equality of opportunity that forms the foundation of the American Dream. Under my Administration, citizens will be treated equally before the law and as individuals, not consigned to a certain fate based on their immutable characteristics.

Sec. 2. Policy. It is the policy of the United States to eliminate the use of disparate-impact liability in all contexts to the maximum degree possible to avoid violating the Constitution, Federal civil rights laws, and basic American ideals.

Sec. 3. Revoking Certain Presidential Actions. The following Presidential approvals of the regulations promulgated under 42 U.S.C. 2000d–1 are hereby revoked:

(a) the Presidential approval of July 25, 1966, of the Department of Justice Title VI regulations (31 *Fed. Reg.* 10269), as applied to 28 C.F.R. 42.104(b)(2) in full; and

(b) the Presidential approval of July 5, 1973, of the Department of Justice Title VI regulations (38 *Fed. Reg.* 17955, FR Doc. 73–13407), as applied to the words "or effect" in both places they appear in 28 C.F.R. 42.104(b)(3), and as applied to 28 C.F.R. 42.104(b)(6)(ii) and 28 C.F.R. 42.104(c)(2) in full.

Sec. 4. Enforcement Discretion to Ensure Lawful Governance. Given the limited enforcement resources of executive departments and agencies (agencies), the unlawfulness of disparate-impact liability, and the policy of this order, all agencies shall deprioritize enforcement of all statutes and regulations to the extent they include disparate-impact liability, including but not limited to 42 U.S.C. 2000e–2, 28 C.F.R. 42.104(b)(2)–(3), 28 C.F.R. 42.104(b)(6)(ii), and 28 C.F.R. 42.104(c)(2).

Sec. 5. Existing Regulations. (a) As delegated by Executive Order 12250 of November 2, 1980 (Leadership and Coordination of Nondiscrimination Laws), the Attorney General shall initiate appropriate action to repeal or amend the implementing regulations for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for all agencies to the extent they contemplate disparate-impact liability.

(b) Within 30 days of the date of this order, the Attorney General, in coordination with the heads of all other agencies, shall report to the President, through the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy:

- (i) all existing regulations, guidance, rules, or orders that impose disparate-impact liability or similar requirements, and detail agency steps for their amendment or repeal, as appropriate under applicable law; and
- (ii) other laws or decisions, including at the State level, that impose disparate-impact liability and any appropriate measures to address any constitutional or other legal infirmities.

Sec. 6. Review of Current Matters. (a) Within 45 days of the date of this order, the Attorney General and the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission shall assess all pending investigations, civil suits, or positions taken in ongoing matters under every Federal civil rights law within their respective jurisdictions, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that rely on a theory of disparate-impact liability, and shall take appropriate action with respect to such matters consistent with the policy of this order.

(b) Within 45 days of the date of this order, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Chair of the Federal Trade Commission, and the heads of other agencies responsible for enforcement of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (Public Law 93–495), Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (the Fair Housing Act (Public Law 90–284, as amended)), or laws prohibiting unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices shall evaluate all pending proceedings that rely on theories of disparate-impact liability and take appropriate action with respect to such matters consistent with the policy of this order.

(c) Within 90 days of the date of this order, all agencies shall evaluate existing consent judgments and permanent injunctions that rely on theories of disparate-impact liability and take appropriate action with respect to such matters consistent with the policy of this order.

Sec. 7. Future Agency Action. (a) In coordination with other agencies, the Attorney General shall determine whether any Federal authorities preempt State laws, regulations, policies, or practices that impose disparate-impact liability based on a federally protected characteristic such as race, sex, or age, or whether such laws, regulations, policies, or practices have constitutional infirmities that warrant Federal action, and shall take appropriate measures consistent with the policy of this order.

(b) The Attorney General and the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission shall jointly formulate and issue guidance or technical assistance to employers regarding appropriate methods to promote equal access to employment regardless of whether an applicant has a college education, where appropriate.

Sec. 8. Severability. If any provision of this order, or the application of any provision to any individual or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this order and the application of its other provisions to any other individuals or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

Sec. 9. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

DONALD J. TRUMP

The White House,
April 23, 2025.

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NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on April 28.

Categories: Executive Orders : Equality of opportunity and meritocracy, efforts to restore.

Subjects: Attorney General; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, restriction efforts; Domestic Policy Council; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Federal Trade Commission; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

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