

Early Steps Toward Reconstruction

President Lincoln was worried about **Reconstruction**, or the rebuilding of the South. He wanted to make it fairly easy for southerners to rejoin the Union. The sooner the nation was reunited, Lincoln believed, the faster the South would be able to rebuild.



Lincoln's Reconstruction Plan As early as 1863, Lincoln outlined his **Ten Percent Plan** for Reconstruction. Under this plan, a southern state could form a new government after 10 percent of its voters swore an oath of loyalty to the United States. The new government had to abolish slavery. Voters could then elect members of Congress and take part in the national government once again.

Lincoln's plan also offered **amnesty**, or a **government pardon**, to Confederates who swore loyalty to the Union. Amnesty would not apply to the former leaders of the Confederacy, however.

A Rival Proposal Many Republicans in Congress felt that the Ten Percent Plan was too generous toward the South. In 1864, they passed the **Wade-Davis Bill**, a rival plan for Reconstruction. It required a majority of white men in each southern state to swear loyalty to the Union. It also denied the right to vote or hold office to anyone who had volunteered to fight for the Confederacy. Lincoln refused to sign the Wade-Davis Bill because he felt it was too harsh.

The Freedmen's Bureau Congress and the President did agree on one proposal. One month before Lee surrendered, Congress passed a bill creating the **Freedmen's Bureau**, a government agency to help former slaves. Lincoln signed the bill.

The Freedmen's Bureau gave food and clothing to former slaves. It also tried to find jobs for freedmen. The bureau helped poor whites as well. It provided medical care for more than one million people.

Viewing History

Richmond in Ruins

After the Civil War, some of the South's most important cities lay in ruins. This picture shows the devastation in Richmond, Virginia.



Drawing Conclusions *What effect do you think this kind of devastation had on southerners?*



Identify Sequence

As you read, identify the major goals and accomplishments of the Freedmen's Bureau. Add these items to your flowchart.

One of the bureau's most important tasks was to set up schools for freedmen. Most of the teachers were volunteers, often women, from the North. Grandparents and grandchildren sat side by side in the classroom. Charlotte Forten, an African American volunteer from Philadelphia, wrote:

“It is wonderful how a people who have been so long crushed to the earth . . . can have so great a desire for knowledge, and such a capacity for attaining it.”

—Charlotte Forten, article in the *Atlantic Monthly*

The Freedmen's Bureau laid the foundation for the South's public school system. It also created colleges for African Americans, including Howard, Morehouse, and Fisk. Many of the graduates of these schools became teachers themselves. By the 1870s, African Americans were teaching in grade schools throughout the South.

Lincoln Is Assassinated

President Lincoln hoped to persuade Congress to accept his Reconstruction plan. However, he never got the chance.

On April 14, 1865, just five days after Lee's surrender, the President attended a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. A popular actor from the South, John Wilkes Booth, crept into the President's box and shot Lincoln in the head. Lincoln died the next morning. Booth was later caught and killed in a barn outside the city.

The nation was plunged into grief. Millions who had been celebrating the war's end now mourned Lincoln's death. "Now he belongs to the ages," commented Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

The New President

Vice President Andrew Johnson was now President. Johnson had represented Tennessee in Congress. When his state seceded, Johnson had remained loyal to the Union.

Johnson's Plan Republicans in Congress believed Johnson would support a strict Reconstruction plan. But his plan was much milder than expected. It called for a majority of voters in each southern state to pledge loyalty to the United States. Each state also had to ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment**, which Congress had approved in January 1865. It banned slavery throughout the nation. (As you read, the Emancipation Proclamation did not free slaves in states loyal to the Union.)

Congress Rebels The southern states quickly met Johnson's conditions. As a result, the President approved their new state governments in late 1865. Voters in the South then elected representatives to Congress. Many of those elected had held office in the Confederacy. For example, Alexander Stephens, the former vice president of the Confederacy, was elected senator from Georgia.

Republicans in Congress were outraged. The men who had led the South out of the Union were being elected to the House and Senate. Also, no southern state allowed African Americans to vote.

When the new Congress met, Republicans refused to let southern representatives take their seats. Instead, they set up a Joint Committee on Reconstruction to form a new plan for the South. The stage was set for a showdown between Congress and the President.

Connecting to Today

Involuntary Servitude

The Thirteenth Amendment banned not only slavery but also "involuntary servitude" anywhere in the United States. Today, this provision helps the government combat new forms of forced labor.

In one case, farm workers were smuggled into the United States in a van. During the three-day trip, they were not allowed to leave the van even for food or bathroom breaks. Then, they were forced by threats of violence to work for their captors to pay off their smuggling fees. The youngest of the victims was 13 years old. In 2000, new laws made it unlawful to hold a person in a "condition of slavery." The government set up a National Worker Exploitation Complaint Line to report such violations of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Why do you think Congress wanted the Thirteenth Amendment to apply to all people, not just citizens?