

1953 - 1955

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**DWIGHT D.  
EISENHOWER**

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## Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. February 2

Our civil and social rights form a central part of the heritage we are striving to defend on all fronts and with all our strength. I believe with all my heart that our vigilant guarding of these rights is a sacred obligation binding upon every citizen. To be true to one's own freedom is, in essence, to honor and respect the freedom of all others.

A cardinal ideal in this heritage we cherish is the equality of rights of all citizens of every race and color and creed.

We know that discrimination against minorities persists despite our allegiance to this ideal. Such discrimination – confined to no one section of the nation – is but the outward testimony to the persistence of distrust and of fear in the hearts of men.

The fact makes all the more vital the fighting of these wrongs by each individual, in every station of life, in is every deed.

Much of the answer lies in the power of fact, fully publicized; of persuasion, honestly pressed; and of conscience, justly aroused; These are methods familiar to our way of life, tested and proven wise.

I propose to use whatever authority exists in the office of the president to end segregation in the District of Columbia, including the federal government, and any segregation in the armed forces.

Here in the District of Columbia, serious attention should be given to the proposal to develop and authorize, through legislation, a system to provide an effective voice in local self-government. While consideration of this proceeds, I recommend an immediate increase of two in the number of District Commissioners to broaden representation of all elements of our local population. This will be a first step toward insuring that this Capital provide an honored example to all communities of our nation.

In this manner, and by the leadership of the office of the president exercised through friendly conferences with those in authority in our states and cities, we expect to make true and rapid progress in civil rights and equality of employment opportunity.

There is one sphere in which civil rights are inevitably involved in federal legislation. This is the sphere of immigration.

It is a manifest right of our government to limit the number of immigrants our nation can absorb. It is also a manifest right of our government to set reasonable requirements on the character and the numbers of the people who come to share our land and our freedom.

It is well for us, however, to remind ourselves occasionally of an equally manifest fact: we are – ne and all – immigrants or sons and daughters of immigrants.

Existing legislation contains injustices. It does, in fact, discriminate. I am informed by members of the Congress that it was realized, at the time of its enactment, that future study of the basis of determining quotas would be necessary. . . .

In another but related area – that of social rights . . .

There is urgent need for greater effectiveness in our programs, both public and private, offering safeguards against the privations that too often come with unemployment, old age, illness, and accident. . . .

Our school system demands some prompt, effective help. During each of the last nine years, more than 1 million children have swelled the elementary and secondary school population of the country. Generally, the school population is proportionately higher in states with low per capita income. This whole situation calls for careful congressional study and action. I am sure that you share my conviction that the firm conditions of federal aid must be proved need and proved lack of local income.

One phase of the school problem demands special action. The school population of many districts has been greatly increased by the swift growth of defense activities. These activities have added little or nothing to the tax resources of the communities affected. Legislation aiding construction of schools in the districts expires on June 30. This law should be renewed; and likewise, the partial payments of current operating expenses for these particular school districts should be made, including the deficiency requirements of the current fiscal year. . . .

“Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” Public Papers of the Presidents, 2/2/53.

This was reprinted in part in the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 2/6/53, 180.

## The President's News Conference of March 19

**Q. Alice A. Dunnigan, Associated Negro Press:** “Mr. President, the Department of the Army is now operating several schools on military posts in Virginia, Oklahoma, and Texas, which eliminate colored children. And in line with your announced policy to eliminate segregation in the Army, I wonder if anything has been done to correct that situation?”)

“All I can say is, I will look it up. I haven't heard it; I will look it up -- [to James Haggerty, press secretary] will you make a point of it?”

“I will say this – I repeat it, I have said it again and again: wherever federal funds are expended for anything, I do not see how any American can justify – legally, or logically, or morally – a discrimination in the expenditure of those funds as among our citizens. All are taxed to provide those funds. If there is any benefit to be derived from them, I think they must all share, regardless of such inconsequential factors as race and religion. ”

## Concerning the President's News Conference of March 19

Statement of James C. Hagerty, press secretary to the president, the White House: At his news conference on Thursday, March 19th, the president was asked if he had any comment concerning segregation in schools on Army posts. The President replied that he did not know of such practices, but in line with his announced conviction that Federal funds should not be spend on any project which practices discrimination because of race or creed, he would have a study made immediately.

Following the conference, a request for details was made to the secretary of the Army. The secretary and subsequently the Bureau of the Budget submitted memoranda to the White House.



President Eisenhower speaks with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division just before they board their planes to participate in the first assault of the Normandy invasion. 1943. Credit: United States Army Signal Corps. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home. Photograph. Accession 65-325-3. <https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov>.

Today, after a study of these papers, the president sent the following memorandum to the secretary of Defense:

**SUBJECT: SEGREGATION IN SCHOOLS ON ARMY POSTS**

At my request, following last week's news conference a memorandum addressed to my press secretary was received from the secretary of army relative to the above subject:

“(1) It states that by the opening of the school term next fall all schools operated by the army under provisions of section 6 of Public Law 874 will be on a completely integrated basis. Consequently, the process of integration is almost completed, but in any event will be concluded prior to the opening of the schools next September.

“(2) The memorandum likewise discusses the operation of schools by state authorities on Federally-owned property under the provisions of Section 3 of Public Law 874. Since these schools are operated with state funds but on federal property and in federally-owned buildings, complicating factors are present.

“The secretary of the army's memorandum indicates that the army commanders are in the process of making a survey relative to this question designed to bring about agreement with local authorities for integrating the schools. If such integration is not achieved, other arrangements in these instances will be considered.”]



# 1953

## The President's News Conference of April 2

**[Speaker unidentified]:** Mr. President, I understood before leaving office, President Truman sent you a report of the Contract Compliance Committee, which was set up to eliminate discrimination in plants with Government contracts. That committee doesn't have a chairman now, and many of ithe members are resigning. What steps have been taken to vitalize that group by appointing a chairman for the committee, and public officers – public members, that is?

**The President:** Again, I am sorry you have asked me a question that I will have to answer next week. That has not been reported to me – that we are lacking in it. We will look it up, and I will try to give you an answer.

President Eisenhower speaks with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division just before they board their planes to participate in the first assault of the Normandy invasion. 1943. Credit: United States Army Signal Corps. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home. Photograph. Accession 77-18-112. <https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov>.





## The President's News Conference of April 23

**Q. Alice A. Dunnigan, Associated Negro Press:** Mr. President, would you tell us whether any steps have been taken, since your last press conference, to revive the work of the Contract Compliance Committee, by appointing a chairman of the Committee?

**The President:** I don't know about appointing a chairman. I did have the matter looked up, and they told me they were looking into the whole matter to see where there was noncompliance, if any, and to do their best on the thing. I haven't heard heard about it [confers with Mr. Hagerty] – no chairman. There will be some announcement on it, the secretary tells me, very soon.

[On August 13, 1953, the president signed Executive Order 10479 establishing the Government Contract Committee. Vice President Nixon was appointed chairman of the committee.]

## Remarks at the United Negro College Fund Luncheon, May 19

“By his or her presence here, each person attending this meeting shows their support for several things in which I passionately believe. One of them is support for the Constitution of the United States which, written in the recognition that all people are the children of God, made no distinction among them by reason of inconsequential factors over which they themselves had no control.

“I believe those of us who preach so loudly about constitutional government advance our cause as we meticulously observe that particular factor or foundation of that great Document.

“Another thing I have preached, as have many others, is against the theory that there can be any second-class citizen. I believe as long as we allow conditions to exist that make for second-class citizens, we are making of ourselves less than first-class citizens.

“In other words, I believe the only way to protect my own rights is to protect the rights of others. ”

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## Letter to James Byrnes, governor of South Carolina, August 14

“Dear Jimmy . . . I think that it is incumbent upon people who honestly believe in the power of leadership, education, example, and acceptance of clear official responsibility to show constant progress in the direction of complete justice. We who hold office not only must discharge the duties placed upon us by the constitution and by conscience, but also must, by constructive advances, prove to be mistaken those who insist that true reforms can come only through overriding Federal law and Federal police methods.

As I observed to you, I feel that my oath of office, as well as my own convictions, requires me to eliminate discrimination within the definite areas of Federal responsibility. . . . There is one of these areas of Federal responsibility where my efforts may run counter to customs in some States. This is the area involved in the “non-discrimination” clauses in Federal contracts. . . .

. . . But I do believe that States should cooperate in, and never impede, the enforcement of Federal regulations where the government has clear and exclusive responsibility in the case.

## The President's News Conference of September 30

[Q. Alice A. Dunnigan: "Recent statements from the Department of Defense indicate that integration in schools on military posts may be delayed until 1955. I understand that Senator Hubert Humphrey has brought this matter to your attention by letter stating that such delays were unnecessary."]

"I have not seen it. . . .

"I will have Mr. Hagerty look it up and let you know; I haven't seen it."



Dwight D. Eisenhower, The President's News Conference, 9/30/53.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9709>

President Eisenhower confers with ranking French, British and American officers at the Arc de Triomphe. August 27, 1944. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Photograph. Accession 111-SC-443069.  
<https://collections.ushmm.org>.

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## Statement on the Elimination of Segregation in Civilian Facilities at Naval Installations, November 11

“The secretary of the Navy has just submitted to me a full report on facilities used by civilian employees at naval installations in the southern states. I agree wholeheartedly with him that the report is most encouraging for it proves conclusively that the Navy’s policy of non-segregation is completely effective. There are, in all, 60 naval activities on federal-owned property in the South. Here are the facts:

1. Twenty installations reported, as of August 1st, that no segregation practices existed.
2. Seventeen additional installations, not initially covered in the August survey, also reported no segregation. One establishment – at Newport News – reported washrooms and toilets were segregated in a building located on non-federal property.
3. Twenty-one further installations, which reported segregation practices in August, revealed segregation had been eliminated by November 1st. One installation – Charleston Shipyard – still reported partial segregation. At Charleston, segregation at drinking fountains and in cafeterias was eliminated, but washrooms are still separated. The shipyard commander stated that in these latter facilities restrictions would be eliminated late in December or early in January.

In summation, of 60 southern installations on federal-owned property only one reported partial segregation. This is a record accomplishment of which we all can be proud and I congratulate the secretary of Navy and his department on a job very well done indeed.

Note: The secretary of the Navy’s report was made public with the president’s statement.

# 1954

## State of the Union Message, January 7

“Segregation in the armed forces and other federal activities is on the way out. We have also made progress toward its elimination in the District of Columbia. These are steps in the continuing effort to eliminate inter-racial difficulty.”

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report,  
2/8/54, 40.

President Eisenhower signs the register at the tomb of the unknown soldier after a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe, in which he was presented the Medal of Liberation by General Charles de Gaulle. June 14, 1945. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Photograph. Accession 111-SC-208561.  
<https://collections.ushmm.org>.





## State of the Union Message, January 8

“... historic progress in eliminating ... demeaning practices based on race or color”

Public Papers of the Presidents, 11/11/53, 765-766. For the historical context of Eisenhower's letter to Byrnes, see Watson, Lion in the Lobby, 227-229.

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## Executive Order 10590, January 18

WHEREAS it is the policy of the United States Government that equal opportunity be afforded all qualified persons, consistent with law, for employment in the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS this policy necessarily excludes and prohibits discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment in the Federal Government because of race, color, religion, or national origin; and

WHEREAS it is essential to the effective application of this policy in all civilian personnel matters that all departments and agencies of the executive branch of the Government adhere to this policy in a fair, objective, and uniform manner....

[This order established the President's Committee on Government Employment Policy



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## The President's News Conference of June 8

(Q. Chalmers M. Roberts, Washington Post and Times-Herald: "Mr. President, if I understand correctly, one of the premises of your trimming the manpower in the Army has been the idea of a ready, trained reserve. The reserve bill was sidetracked in the House recently because of a segregation rider affecting the National Guard in the States, and also an amendment which would appear to rule out the sending of such reserves to countries where we have these Status of Forces agreements.

"I wonder if you could tell us what plans the administration has to get this bill out, if my assumption is correct, that you feel that it is vital.)

THE PRESIDENT. "Well, of course, I feel the reserve bill is vital . . . I think the record of this administration on carrying out its pledges in the whole field of segregation is a good one. We have worked hard to take the Federal responsibility in this regard, and to carry it forward so as to get real advancement.

"I believe, on the other hand, that it is entirely erroneous to try to get legislation of this character through tacking it on to something that is so vital to the security of the United States as the security program. The mere fact that we can't all have our ways about particular things in social progress—does that mean we don't want to defend our country?

"Why do we make the defense of our country dependent upon all of us getting our own ways here?

"Now as I say, I think the administration's record here stands up very well indeed—compared to any other administration I know of. But I just don't believe that it is the place to have any kind of extraneous legislation. I care not what it is. "

## The President's News Conference of July 6

(Q. Mrs. May Craig, Maine Papers: Mr. President, the Republican leaders included school construction in your top priority list of measures you wanted. Would you oppose and consider as extraneous an anti-segregation amendment to that bill?)

**THE PRESIDENT.** "I would think it was extraneous, yes, for the simple reason that we need the schools. I think that the other ought to be handled on its own merits.

"Besides, we do have this: there apparently is plenty of law, because the Supreme Court found it to be illegal, and they have issued, as I understand it, procedural orders that will have to be carried out in due course through the district courts.

"Now, who do we go muddying the water? At the moment I do not quarrel with the right of Congress to pass laws on this thing; but I think they ought to do it on their own."