

*D.C. Office of Human Rights
Commission on Human Rights
presents:*

The District of Columbia: **A Model for Human and Civil Rights Protections**



December 2023
Human Rights Awards Ceremony
“Protecting and Celebrating Bodies and Minds of All Abilities”



GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR





Each year the Commission on Human Rights and the Office of Human Rights holds an annual awards ceremony around the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the International Human Rights Day (December 10) to acknowledge those who have made significant contributions to human and civil rights protections. This year, the gala will honor individuals and communities who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of people with physical and mental disabilities.

DID YOU KNOW:

The sunflower is a globally recognized symbol for people with invisible or hidden disabilities.



Table of Contents



○ Director's Note.....	3
○ Introduction.....	5
○ Timeline.....	6
○ Protected Traits under HRA.....	33
○ Ceremonial Resolution.....	34

Director's Note

Dear Residents, Neighbors, and Friends:

December 10th, 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This landmark document enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being. It has and remains a foundation for expanding human rights protections for some of our most vulnerable groups. In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed its pledge to promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development with the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons. The document makes 13 distinct proclamations that essentially reiterate that people with disabilities have the same rights as other persons.

In honor of the 48th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the Commission on Human Rights and the Office of Human Rights selected a theme that celebrates and honors those who have gone above and beyond to improve the

lives of people with physical and mental disabilities. To support this effort, the Office of Human Rights releases this special edition of “District of Columbia: A Model for Human and Civil Rights Protections,” which includes an expanded timeline highlighting the local and national efforts to protect people with disabilities. This special edition presents a renewed opportunity to see how far we’ve come as a city and a nation in the fight against prejudice and discrimination.

As we reflect on the past and look toward the future, I hope that you are inspired to learn more about the continued challenges that people with disabilities face and join efforts to address how ableism negatively impacts all of us. After, nearly everyone will experience a temporary or permanent disability in their lifetime. By striving towards a society that is inclusive, respectful, and values people of all abilities, we get one step closer to eradicating prejudice and discrimination.

Yours in service,



Hnin Khaing

A Tradition is Born

D.C. has a long and rich tradition of being progressive and forward thinking, though it has not come without struggle or adversity. Each successive event described below builds on and expands the protections for human and civil rights before it. *This is not a comprehensive list.*

****Each bolded date represents an event related to disability rights history.****

19th century

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1817

First Permanent School for Deaf Persons

Thomas H. Gallaudet opens the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons in Hartford, CT on April 17th with 7 students.

1829

Raised Point Alphabet is Invented

Louis Braille invents the raised point alphabet; it does not become well-known in the US until 1860 when it is first taught at the St. Louis School for the Blind.

1848

First Women's Rights Convention is held

The Seneca Falls, NY Convention launches the women's suffrage movement.

UDC is founded

1851

Myrtilla Miner founds the Normal School for Colored Girls on December 3, 1851. It later becomes the University of the District of Columbia, the second oldest HBCU in the nation.

1862

Emancipation in the District

Despite being a thriving center for the trade in human captives, the District also serves as a hub for anti-slavery activity. This tense struggle comes to an end on April 16th, when Congress passes the D.C. Compensated Emancipation Act. Though it ended enslavement of nearly 3,100 African Americans, it reimbursed their enslavers for loss of property.

1864

Gallaudet University is founded

It remains the only higher educational institution in the world in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students.

19th century

1865

Black Male Suffrage

On December 19, 1865, the U.S. Congress passes a law giving Black men the right to vote in the District, and the following February, Black men in D.C. were legally able to vote three years before the passage of the 15th amendment. As a result, newly freed Black men help elect progressive white Republicans and even manage to secure several seats for themselves. Unfortunately, Jim Crow sets in before the turn of the century and the window for racial progressivism closes, but not before one of D.C.'s new Black council members set the stage for a mass movement to end discrimination in the city.

1867

Freedman's Bureau purchases a 375-acre

A 375-acre tract of land that would become Barry Farm-Hillsdale is purchased from Julia Barry, a white landowner, by General Oliver Howard, Senator Samuel Pomeroy, and John Elvans. The land was subdivided into one-acre plots, which could be purchased over a period of seven years. Because the community was isolated from the rest of D.C., its residents were forced to build their own homes, benevolent and literary societies, independent press, churches, and schools. As a result, it became the home base for an emergent Black political class, including Frederick Douglass.

Howard University is founded

Affectionately known as "the Mecca", Howard is chartered on March 2, 1867. Some of the most notable alum include Thurgood Marshall, Vice President Kamala Harris, Toni Morrison, Diane Nash, Stokely Carmichael, and Pauli Murray.

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19th century

1868

14th Amendment ratified

Grants citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, including those who were formally enslaved, and guaranteed them equal protection under the law.

1869

American Woman Suffrage Association founded

A division in the women's rights movement over support for the 15th amendment led to the establishment of two organizations: The National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association. The latter supported the new law, which would give African American men the right to vote.

1870

15th Amendment ratified

Prohibits the federal government and each state from denying or abridging a citizen's right to vote on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

1872

Equal Services Acts

In the early summer of 1872, Lewis Douglass, the son of Frederick Douglass and an elected city council member, proposes the first Equal Services Act, which barred discrimination in places of entertainment, restaurants, bars, and hotels. Any business to violate this prohibition was fined \$100 and/or had their business license suspended for a year.

1873

D.C. city council passes the 1873 Act which stipulated those facilities had to be open for "any respectable, well-behaved person without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

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20th century

1907

Sterilization Law for People with Disabilities

Indiana becomes the first state to enact a compulsory eugenic sterilization law for “confirmed idiots, imbeciles, and rapists in state institutions. This law was upheld by *Buck v. Bell* (1927).

Charles Curtis becomes the first Indigenous U.S. Senator

Woman Suffrage Procession

Thousands of women march along Pennsylvania Avenue on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson’s presidential inauguration, in a procession organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The march was the first large, organized march on Washington for political purposes.

1913

Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act

Establishes a program of vocational rehabilitation for soldiers disabled during active duty. It offered a new concept in disability support: training for injured veterans as preparation for their new jobs matching their “new” abilities.

1918

Smith-Fess Act

Also known as the Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act, the Act establishes a federal program to provide vocational assistance to Americans with physical disabilities. It is modeled after the 1907 Act.

1920

19th Amendment ratified

Prohibits the federal government and states from denying citizens the right to vote on the basis of sex.

20th century

1921

FDR diagnosed with polio

The future 32nd president is diagnosed at age 39 with total and permanent paralysis below the waist. He would go on to support the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (March of Dimes). In recognition of his support, he is commemorated on the dime. He would take great effort to conceal his disability while in office.

1924

Indian Citizenship Act of 1924

Enacted partially in recognition of the thousands who served in WWI, the Act grants citizenship to Indigenous peoples of the U.S.

1934

Indian Reorganization Act

Measure enacted by Congress to decrease federal control of Indigenous affairs and increasing self-governance and responsibility. Spurred in part by Indigenous service in WWI and by the Meriam survey.

1935

Chinese Community Church established

The CCC is the oldest dedicated to serving the Chinese community in the District and the last one still in operation. It first began offering bilingual masses in English in Cantonese and after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 it began offering masses in Mandarin.

Social Security Act of 1935

Establishes a system of federal benefits for elderly, unemployed, and disadvantaged Americans. Part of President Roosevelt's New Deal Program to provide for the general welfare of the nation.

Each bolded date represents an event related to disability rights history.

Randolph-Sheppard Act

1936

Mandates a priority to persons who are blind to operate vending facilities on federal property. It would later be amended and updated significantly in 1974.

Little Palaca Cafeteria protest

1943

Pauli Murray, Ruth Powell and two other female students from Howard University go to the Little Palace Cafeteria on U Street, which was a whites-only establishment. Three of the students enter the restaurant and request to be served, while a fourth waits outside. After being refused service, they sit down. Every five minutes more students enter the restaurant until it was filled with students waiting to be served. Management became overwhelmed and refused to serve the students, so they decided to close the restaurant for nearly an hour. The students move their protest outside and within two days the restaurant changed its segregation policy. This protest is the earliest recorded student protest of the Civil Rights Movement.

1944

National Congress of American Indians founded

Oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization established to represent the tribes and resist pressure from the federal government to terminate tribal rights

Lost Laws Rediscovered

Pauli Murray, then the only woman and the top student in Howard University's School of Law Class of 1944, rediscovers the 1872 and 1873 laws. They were "lost" during a recodification of the city's laws in 1901. Copies remained in the Supreme Court Library, Library of Congress, and D.C. Public Library.

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National Mental Health Act

1946 Signed into law on July 3, the Act establishes and provides funds for the National Institute of Mental Health and made mental health a federal priority. It was inspired in part by the poor mental health of draftees and veterans.

1947 ***National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week***

Occurs October 6-12th; Using movie trailers, billboards, radio and tv ads, the Presidential Committee emphasizes the competence of people with disabilities and that it is good business to hire people with disabilities.

Paralyzed Veterans of American founded

Promotes and protects the civil rights of veterans with disabilities, especially those who have spinal cord injuries.

1948

Shelley v. Kramer

Landmark Supreme Court case that holds racially restrictive housing covenants cannot be legally enforced. *Hurd vs. Hodge* and *Urciolo v. Hodge* are companion cases in the District. Will later be supported by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

ARC founded

1950

An organization founded by parents of children with intellectual disabilities to change public perception and works to ensure that the estimated 7.2 million Americans with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the services and support they need to grow, develop, and live in communities across the nation. It is the first organization that funds research on intellectual and developmental disabilities.

20th century

1950

Thompson's Restaurant protest

Mary Church Terrell and others form the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws. On January 27th Terrell met Rev. William H. Jernigan, Geneva Brown, and David Scull at 725 14th Street NW. It was one of the many places in the District that had a whites-only policy, and Scull was the only white person in the group. As the group began looking at the menu, Levin Ange, the manager, informed the group that Thompson's did not serve colored people. Once Terrell clarified that they would not be served, the group left. This response was expected and wanted as it would allow them to take the first step in testing the Lost Laws.

1953

D.C. v John R. Thompson Co.

The case was brought before Municipal Court Judge Frank Myers on March 31, 1950. Judge Myers ruled that the Lost Laws were no longer enforceable as they had been repealed by implication. Undeterred by Judge Meyer's decision, Terrell returned to Thompson's restaurant on July 27th. The District appealed Meyers' decision, setting the stage to bring the case before the Supreme Court. On April 27, 1953, the Supreme Court heard the arguments and issued its decision on June 8th. The Court ruled unanimously in favor of the city and ruled that restaurants must open their doors to all regardless of race.

20th century

1954

Brown v. Board of Education

Landmark legislation that abolishes school segregation AND public schools were given permission to educate children with significant intellectual disabilities.

Social Security Act amended Act amended

The 1935 act is amended, in part, to protect the benefit rights of people with disabilities through a disability freeze provision.

Bolling v. Sharpe

The 1935 act is amended, in part, to protect the benefit rights of people with disabilities through a disability freeze provision.

Hernandez v. Texas

The first and only Mexican-American civil rights case heard and decided by the Supreme Court in the post- WWII period. It held that Mexican Americans and all other nationality groups have equal protection under the 14th Amendment. Was also the first case in which Mexican American lawyers appeared before the Court.

Dalip Saund sworn in

1957

Saund is sworn in as the first Asian American, first Indian American, and first Sikh in Congress

Mattachine Society of Washington formed

1961

The Mattachine was D.C.'s first gay activist group and fought for civil rights in security clearances and job discrimination. It was founded by Dr. Franklin Kameny, Paul Kuntzler, Eva Freund, Jack Nichols, Lilli Vincenz, and others.

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National Indian Youth Council established

Second oldest American Indian organization in the US, the first independent Indigenous student organization, and one of the first Indigenous organizations to use direct protest as a mean to pursue its goals.

1962

Independent Living Movement

Ed Roberts, considered the father of the independent living movement, paves a path for people with physical disabilities in higher education after the University of California, Berkeley attempted to rescind his acceptance upon learning he had polio. He would later found the Center of Independent Living in 1972 and the World Institute on Disability, with Judy Heumann, in 1980.

National Farm Workers Association founded

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta found the NFWA in Delano, California. Using nonviolent organizing tactics rooted in Catholic teaching, Chicano identity, and civil rights rhetoric, the organization defends the rights of farmworkers to seek better pay and working conditions. It is the predecessor of the United Farm Workers.

1963

Equal Pay Act

Amends the Fair Labor Standards Act to abolish wage disparity based on sex. Signed into law by JFK on June 10th.

20th century

March on Washington

In August 1963, nearly 250,000 people gather at the Lincoln Memorial to draw attention to the challenges and inequities faced by African Americans, to protest racial discrimination, and to show support for pending major civil rights legislation. Formally known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the massive protest was organized by A. Phillip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, and Martin Luther King Jr. During the protest, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

1964

Prohibits discrimination in public places, provided for the integration of schools of other facilities; and made employment discrimination illegal on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, and sex. People with disabilities were left out.

1965

Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965

Reforms immigration law to remove de facto discrimination against Southern and Eastern Europeans, Asians, and other non-Western and Northern European immigrants. It also abolished the National Origins Formula, which had been the basis of immigration policy since the 1920s. Though unintended, the law had a profound impact on the flow of immigration and has permanently transformed the U.S. demographic profile.

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20th century

Higher Education Act

Provides access to financial aid, including subsidized grants and student loans to qualified post-secondary students.

Voting Rights Act

Expands the 14th and 15th amendment by banning racial discrimination in voting practices.

Medicaid Assistance for People with Disabilities

Title XIX (19) of the Social Security Act creates a cooperative federal and state entitlement program that pays medical costs for certain individuals with disabilities and families with low incomes.

Pasty Mink sworn in

Mink (1927-2002) swears in as the first Asian American woman and first woman of color to serve in Congress. She served in the House of Representatives for 24 years as a member of the Democratic Party.

The Homosexual Citizen published

1966

The Mattachine Society publishes D.C.'s first local civil rights magazine.

Cuban American Adjustment Act

Allows Cuban natives or citizens living in the US who had US residency for two years to apply to become a lawful permanent resident by getting a green card.

Washington appointed Mayor-Commissioner

1967

Walter E. Washington is appointed as the first and only Mayor-Commissioner of the District. He served until he was elected as the first Black mayor in the District and the first to lead a major American city in 1975.

20th century

1968

Age Discrimination in Employment Act

Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Act prohibits discrimination in employment against anyone at least 40 years of age.

Civil Rights Act of 1968

Title I permits federal prosecution of anyone who willingly injures or interferes with another person due to their race, color, religion, or national origin.

Title II-VII comprise the Indian Civil Rights Act which grants Indigenous peoples full access to the Bill of Rights.

Title VIII and XI are known as the Fair Housing Act; prohibits discrimination when people are renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other housing-related activities.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education fund opens

Founded in San Antonio, MALDEF is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization.

1969

Stonewall Riots

A series of protests erupt after a police raid that begins at the Stonewall Inn on the early morning on June 28th. These riots served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement.

20th century

1971

COHR and OHR established

The Commission on Human Rights and the Office of Human Rights are established on July 8, 1971, by Commissioner's Order No. 71-224.

Kameny runs for Congress

Dr. Franklin Kameny becomes the first openly gay man to run a political campaign in the District.

1972

D.C. School Board extends LGBTQ protections

On May 23, 1972, the D.C. School Board passes a fair employment resolution covering all school employees. The decision prohibits discrimination in hiring, employment, retirement, and/or job classification practices regardless of sex or sexual orientation. This gave LGBTQ teachers job security for the first time.

Schaefers et al v. Wilson

The city agreed that considering both case law privacy in the U.S. and the legislative history of the D.C. sodomy law that it would no longer prosecute anyone for private, consensual adult sodomy.

1973

Rehabilitation Act

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and the employment practices of federal contractors.

20th century

Title 34

On November 17, 1973, D.C. City Council adopts Regulation No. 73-22, also known as Title 34 or the Human Rights Law, after finding that the “failure to provide equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life...not only threatens the rights and proper privileges of its inhabitants, but menaces the institutions and foundations of a free democratic society and threatens the lives, limbs, health, comfort, quiet of all persons and the protections of all property in the District.”

Title 34 is an expansive human rights law that included prohibiting discrimination in educational institutions, employment, housing, and public accommodations based on one’s race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, disability, source of income, or place of residence or business. It makes D.C. one of the first major cities in the country to provide protections for the LGBTQ community.

1974

Last of the “Ugly Laws” Repealed

Enacted between 1867 and 1974, these were a series of ordinances that targeted low-income people and people with disabilities. They allowed police the arrest and jail people for no other reason that being “disfigured” or having some type of disability.

Lau v. Nichols

Supreme Court case that rules public schools must provide language instruction to students with limited English proficiency.

Equal Opportunity Act of 1974

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, or national origin against faculty, staff, and students, including racial segregation, and requires school districts to take action to overcome barriers to students' equal participation. It is one of a number of laws affecting educational institutions.

Southwest Voter Registration Education Project

Founded by William C. Velasquez in San Antonio, it is one of the oldest and largest non-partisan Latino voter participation organizations in the U.S. It has registered 2.6 million Latino voters and trained 150k leaders.

1975

Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act

Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and other government agencies to enter into contracts with, and make grants directly to, federally recognized Indian tribes. It also helped establish a program of assistance to upgrade Indigenous education and support the right of Indigenous people to control their own educational activities.

1977

D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977

Title 34 laid of the foundation for the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977. Today, it remains one of the most comprehensive human rights laws in the nation with 23 protected traits.

20th century

Chinese Service Center founded

The CCC founds the CSC to provide social and human services to the Asian immigrant community. Many of the CSC's programs were focused on providing assistance to recently arrived Asian immigrants living in and around Chinatown.

1978

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Protects the rights of Indigenous people to exercise their traditional religion.

The Longest Walk

On February 11, more than 300 Indigenous people gather on Alcatraz Island to begin a 5-month pilgrimage to D.C. It was both a political and spiritual demonstration seeking change to federal Indian policy. It marked a clear evolution in the struggle for Indigenous rights.

Pregnancy Discrimination Act

Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and other government agencies to enter into contracts with, and make grants directly to, federally recognized Indigenous tribes. It also helps establish a program of assistance to upgrade Indigenous education and support the right of Indigenous people to control their own educational activities.

20th century

1979

Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Week

Efforts to recognize Asian and Pacific Islander contributions began in the late 1970s. In 1977, NY Rep. Frank Horton first introduced House Joint Resolution 540 and in 1979 President Jimmy Carter signed it into Public Law 95-419 on October 5. It would take a decade before the week was extended to a month long celebration in May.

1982

Vietnam War Memorial is dedicated

Architect Maya Lin designed the 2- 246 ft. 9 in. adjoining walls that are engraved with the names of service members who died or remain missing as a result of their service in Vietnam and South East Asia.

1986

Immigration Reform and Control Act

Signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, the Act introduces civil and criminal penalties to employers who hired undocumented immigrants or individuals unauthorized to work in the U.S. It also offered legalization, which led to lawful permanent residence and prospective naturalization to undocumented migrants who entered the country before 1982.

1988

First Latino in President Cabinet

Dr. Lauro Fred Cavazos (1927-2022) was a pioneering education administrator, a sixth generation Mexican American, and the first Latino to serve in a presidential cabinet. Cavazos served as the Secretary of Education from 1988 to 1990 under both Reagan and H.W. Bush.

1990

Capitol Crawl

On March 13, disability rights activists and protestors with disabilities marched from the White House to the Capitol to protest efforts to stop the ADA from passing. Led by an organization called ADAPT, many climbed out of their mobility devices and began crawling up the 365 steps to the capitol doors. It was one of the most visible and emotionally impactful demonstrations for disability rights.

Americans with Disabilities Act

A landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local government' programs and services.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

Federal law that establishes ownership of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or other cultural items excavated for discovered on federal or tribal land belong to lineal descendants, Indian tribes, or Native Hawaiian organizations.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Requires students with disabilities to be involved in developing their transitions plans and consideration be given for their interests and preferences.

1991

Pratt elected Mayor

Sharon Pratt (b.1944) is elected as the first female and first African American female mayor of the District in 1991. She is the daughter of D.C. Superior Court judge Carlisle Edward Pratt and Mildred “Peggy” Pratt.

Autism becomes a special education category

The federal government includes autism in the special category, leading public schools to begin identifying children on the autism spectrum and offering necessary services.

D.C. Parental Leave Act

1994

As of August 17, 1994, all employers in the District are required to provide an eligible employee with up to 24 hours of leave during a 12-month period to attend or participate in a school-related event for their child in which the child is a participant or subject.

1996

Federal Telecommunications Act

Act requires computers, telephones, closed captioning and many other telecommunication devices and equipment be made accessible.

1999

Olmstead v L.C. and E.W.

In the most important civil rights decision for people with disabilities, the Supreme Court held that they had the qualified right to receive state funded support and services in the community rather than institutions.

Each bolded date represents an event related to disability rights history.

2000

Mineta nominated as Secretary of Commerce

President Bill Clinton nominates Norman Mineta (1931-2022) to serve as the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, making him the first Asian American to hold a presidential cabinet post.

2001

Commonwealth of Virginia expresses regret

Virginia becomes the first commonwealth to formally express regret for its eugenics legislation that resulted in the involuntary sterilization of more than 8,000 people with disabilities between 1924 and 1979.

2002

Same-sex Domestic Partnerships legalized

D.C. City Council legalizes same-sex domestic partnerships through the Health Benefits Expansion Act. The measure was not approved by Congress, however, until 2002. Despite Congress' inaction, partners of District employees were able to gain benefits since 1992.

2004

First Disability Pride Parade

Nearly 2,000 people attend the first Disability Pride Parade in Chicago. The event was designed to change the way people think about and define disability, to break down and end the internalized shame among people with disabilities, and to promote the belief that disability is a natural and beautiful part of life.

Language Access Act

The Language Access Act of 2004 was enacted by Mayor Anthony A. Williams on April 21, 2004, with the purpose of providing greater access and participation in public services, programs, and activities for limited-English speaking (LEP) and non-English speaking (NEP) residents, visitors, and employees.

Each bolded date represents an event related to disability rights history.

21st century

2005

Genetic Information added to HRA

Three years before the passage of the federal GINA, D.C. adds genetic information as the 17th protected trait under the HRA. Protections apply in the areas of employment and public accommodations.

2006

Reauthorization of Voting Rights Act

President Bush reauthorizes key provision of Voting Rights Act and it is renamed the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Cesar Chavez Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.

2007

Gender Identity and Expression added to HRA

Gender Identity and Expression was added as the 18th protected trait under the HRA. Protections apply in all four enforcement areas.

Status as a Victim of Intrafamily Offense added to HRA

Becomes the 19th protected trait under the HRA and only applies to housing enforcement area.

2008

D.C. becomes a Human Rights City

On the 60th anniversary of the UDHR, D.C. City Council unanimously adopted City Council Resolution (CER-17-461), making D.C. the first human rights city in the nation. Adoption of the resolution was made possible by the urging of the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning and the American Friends Service Committee's DC Peace and Economic Justice Program, and supported by the D.C. Office of Human Rights, more than 20 community organizations, individuals, churches, and colleges. There are now more than 40 cities in 26 countries.

2009

Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act

The Act makes important changes to the definition of the term "disability" by rejecting the holdings in several Supreme Court decisions and portions of EEOC's ADA regulations. The effect of these changes is to make it easier for an individual seeking protection under the ADA to establish that he or she has a disability within the meaning of the ADA.

Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act of 2009

First legislation specific to people with paralysis. It promotes research, rehabilitation, and quality of life initiatives for those living with spinal cord injuries and paralysis.

Rosa's Law enacted

President Barack Obama signs "Rosa's Law" into legislation, replacing the term "mental retardation" with the term "intellectual disability." Law is named for 9-year old Rosa Marcellino, a young advocate with Down Syndrome.

Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act

Bolsters worker protections against pay discrimination and allows individuals facing pay discrimination to seek rectification under federal anti-discrimination laws.

Same-sex marriage legalized

Same sex marriage in the District is legalized by Mayor Adrian Fenty in 2009, six years before it was federally recognized in all 50 states. As a result, D.C. became the only jurisdiction below the Mason-Dixon line to allow same-sex marriages until Maryland legalized it on January 1, 2013.

2012

Global Accessibility Awareness Day and World Down Syndrome Day established

Purpose is to get everyone talking, thinking, and learning about digital access and inclusion for the 1 billion+ people with disabilities.

Unemployed Anti-Discrimination Act

The UADA becomes effective on October 1, 2015, and prohibits employers, employment agencies or entities acting on an employer's behalf from discriminating against an individual applicant because they are unemployed.

Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act of 2014

2014

The Act requires D.C. employers to provide reasonable workplace accommodations for employees whose ability to perform their job duties is limited because of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, or a related medical condition. All District employers are required to post and maintain a PPW workplace poster in a conspicuous place and provide an employee notice of the law within 10 days of an employee notifying them of their pregnancy or other condition addressed in the Act.

Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act updated

On March 24th, new rules took effect covering employers who are federal contractors or subcontractors; these rules strength the enforcement of the ADA and put into place new employer requirements around recruiting, hiring, and accommodating individuals with disabilities.

Fair Credit in Employment Act of 2016

2016

The Fair Credit in Employment Amendment Act of 2016 prohibits employers, employment agencies, and labor organizations from discriminating against employees or applicants based on their credit information. The law becomes enforceable on October 1, 2017. As a result, Credit Information became the 20th protected trait.

Fair Criminal Record Screening for Housing Act

On October 1, 2017, OHR begins enforcing the Fair Criminal Record Screening for Housing Act of 2016, which prevents unlawful screening of a housing applicant's criminal background. The Act includes requirements for rental housing providers: 1) provision of written notice of rent eligibility criteria to applicants and 2) not making an inquiry or asking any questions related to an applicant's criminal background or arrest history at any time prior to making a conditional offer of housing to the applicant.

2017

Same-Sex adoption

On February 15th, Mayor Muriel Bowser signs a law that allows commercial surrogacy contracts for all couples. The measure was passed unanimously by a vote of 13-0.

2018

Prevention of Street Harassment Act

The Act becomes the first legal measure of its kind in the nation by 1) creating a legal definition of street harassment; 2) establishing a community-based Advisory committee to study street harassment and develop model policies and trainings; and 3) requiring a public information campaign on street harassment.

2019

Status as a Victim or Family Member of a Victim of Domestic Violence, Sexual Offense, or Stalking becomes 21st protected trait

The Employment Protections for Victims of DVSOS Amendment Act of 2019 becomes enforceable on October 1, 2019. The law prohibits employers, employment agencies, and labor organizations from discriminating against victims and family members of victims of DVSOS.

2020

Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV in Long-Term Care Facilities

In 2020, the D.C. Act on the Aging is amended to include LGBTQ seniors and seniors with HIV. The HRA was also amended to establish an LGBTQ and HIV long-term care bill of rights to provide rights and legal protections for LGBTQ residents and residents with HIV in long-term care facilities. The amendment prohibits discrimination against an individual by a long-term care facility or its staff because of an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or HIV status.

Electric Shock is banned

Electric shock devices are banned for use on people on the autism spectrum or others with developmental or cognitive disabilities.

Rebranding the national team

The Washington National Football League, formerly the Washington Redskins, begins the process of rebranding. They later become the Washington Commanders.

2021

Harris becomes Vice President

Kamala Harris swears in as the first Black, first Asian American, and first female Vice President in U.S. History.

2022

Homeless Status added as 22nd trait

On October 1, 2022, the Human Rights Enhancement Amendment Act (A24-491) becomes effective. Three main aspects of this bill include: 1) specifically adding independent contractors to the definition of an “employee” covered by the HRA; 2) adding homeless status as a protected trait across all four enforcement areas; and 3) redefining and expanding the definition of hostile work environment.

Sealed Eviction Record added as 23rd trait

Also on October 1st, parts of the Eviction Record Sealing Authority and Fairness in Renting Amendment Act of 2022 (A24-357) becomes effective as of October 1. The main aspects of the bill related to OHR include: 1) adding sealed eviction record as a protected trait in housing and requiring landlords to comply with various provisions with respect to tenant screening; and 2) explicitly establishing certain conduct as a form of source of income discrimination.

2023

Protections for Domestic Workers

The Domestic Workers Employment Rights Amendment Act of 2022 becomes effective on October 1st. The Act ensures all domestic workers in the District are entitled to the same rights and protections as their counterparts in other industries.

Protected Traits under the Human Rights Act of 1977



The DCHRA protects residents, employees, and visitors against discrimination based on 23 protected traits across four enforcement areas: educational institutions, employment, housing, and public accommodations and government institutions. Unless otherwise noted the traits apply to all four areas. For more information about the protected traits, including their definitions, please scan the QR code above.

1. **Age**
2. **Color**
3. **Disability**
4. **Family responsibilities**
5. **Gender identity or expression** (2006)
6. **Homeless status** (2022)
7. **Marital Status**
8. **Personal appearance**
9. **Political affiliation**
10. **National origin**
11. **Race**
12. **Religion**
13. **Sex**
14. **Sexual Orientation**
15. **Credit information** (2017, employment)
16. **Familial status** (educational institutions, housing, and public accommodations)
17. **Genetic information** (employment and public accommodations)
18. **Matriculation** (employment, housing, and public accommodations)
19. **Place of Residence or Business** (housing and public accommodations)
20. **Sealed eviction records** (2022, housing)
21. **Source of income** (educational institutions, housing, and public accommodations)
22. **Status as Victim of Intrafamily Office** (housing)
23. **Status as a Victim of DVSOS** (employment)

A Ceremonial Resolution

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To recognize December 10, 2008, as “Washington, DC Human Rights Day” in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, December 10, 2008, marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

WHEREAS, The United Nations passed resolution A/RES/62/171 proclaiming the year commencing on December 10, 2008 the international Year of Human Rights Learning;

WHEREAS, This is an opportunity to call attention to human rights violations around the world and to continue to promote the importance of educating our citizens about human rights;

WHEREAS, The District of Columbia Public Schools has partnered with the American Friends Service Committee to create courses that teach our students about human rights issues;

WHEREAS, On this day, citizens of the nation’s capital, led by individuals and organizations, affirm their commitment to human rights by declaring Washington, DC, a Human Rights City;

WHEREAS, Washington, DC being a Human Rights City makes it a model for communities around the world to witness practical ways the human rights framework can make every citizen a partner of sustainable change;

WHEREAS, A Human Rights City is one whose residents and local authorities, through on-going discussions and creative exchanges of ideas, come to understand that human rights, when widely known as a way of life, assist in identifying the issues and informs the actions in our DC communities, for meaningful, positive economic and social change;

WHEREAS, Developing Human Rights Cities is an attempt to build infrastructure for conflict prevention, human security, sustainable development, and create a place for active civic engagement at the local, national, and global level;

WHEREAS, Washington, DC will be declared the first Human Rights City in the United States;

WHEREAS, As a Human Rights City, Washington, DC will be joining other human rights cities around the world in working to provide leadership and advocacy to secure, protect, and promote human rights for all people;

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this resolution may be cited as the “Washington, DC Human Rights Day Recognition Resolution of 2008.”

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes December 10, 2008 as “Washington, DC Human Rights Day.”

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of the publication in the District of Columbia Register.



Special thanks to Dr. Mia L. Carey for her exceptional dedication in creating this booklet.