

**TITLE 42 - THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE**  
**CHAPTER 20 - ELECTIVE FRANCHISE**  
**SUBCHAPTER I-A - ENFORCEMENT OF VOTING RIGHTS**

**§ 1973a. Proceeding to enforce the right to vote**

**(a) Authorization by court for appointment of Federal observers**

Whenever the Attorney General or an aggrieved person institutes a proceeding under any statute to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court shall authorize the appointment of Federal observers by the Director of the Office of Personnel Management in accordance with section 1973d<sup>1</sup> of this title to serve for such period of time and for such political subdivisions as the court shall determine is appropriate to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment

(1) as part of any interlocutory order if the court determines that the appointment of such observers is necessary to enforce such voting guarantees or

(2) as part of any final judgment if the court finds that violations of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment justifying equitable relief have occurred in such State or subdivision: Provided, That the court need not authorize the appointment of observers if any incidents of denial or abridgement of the right to vote on account of race or color, or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title

(1) have been few in number and have been promptly and effectively corrected by State or local action,

(2) the continuing effect of such incidents has been eliminated, and

(3) there is no reasonable probability of their recurrence in the future.

**(b) Suspension of use of tests and devices which deny or abridge the right to vote**

If in a proceeding instituted by the Attorney General or an aggrieved person under any statute to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that a test or device has been used for the purpose or with the effect of denying or abridging the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color, or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title, it shall suspend the use of tests and devices in such State or political subdivisions as the court shall determine is appropriate and for such period as it deems necessary.

**(c) Retention of jurisdiction to prevent commencement of new devices to deny or abridge the right to vote**

If in any proceeding instituted by the Attorney General or an aggrieved person under any statute to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that violations of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment justifying equitable relief have occurred within the territory of such State or political subdivision, the court, in addition to such relief as it may grant, shall retain jurisdiction for such period as it may deem appropriate and during such period no voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect at the time the proceeding was commenced shall be enforced unless and until the court finds that such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure does not have the purpose and will not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color, or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title: Provided, That such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure may be enforced if the qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure has been submitted by the chief legal officer or other appropriate official of such State or subdivision to the Attorney General and the Attorney General has not interposed an objection within sixty days after such submission, except

that neither the court's finding nor the Attorney General's failure to object shall bar a subsequent action to enjoin enforcement of such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See References in Text note below.

(Pub. L. 89–110, title I, § 3, Aug. 6, 1965, 79 Stat. 437; renumbered title I, Pub. L. 91–285, § 2, June 22, 1970, 84 Stat. 314; amended Pub. L. 94–73, title II, §§ 205, 206, title IV, §§ 401, 410, Aug. 6, 1975, 89 Stat. 402, 404, 406; 1978 Reorg. Plan No. 2, § 102, eff. Jan. 1, 1979, 43 F.R. 36037, 92 Stat. 3783; Pub. L. 109–246, § 3(d)(1), July 27, 2006, 120 Stat. 580.)

### References in Text

Section 1973d of this title, referred to in subsec. (a), was repealed by Pub. L. 109–246, § 3(c), July 27, 2006, 120 Stat. 580.

### Amendments

2006—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 109–246 substituted “observers” for “examiners” wherever appearing.

1975—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 94–73 inserted reference to fourteenth amendment in three places, and substituted “voting guarantees” for “guarantees” in three places, “Attorney General or an aggrieved person” for “Attorney General”, and “on account of race or color or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title” for “on account of race or color”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 94–73 substituted “Attorney General or an aggrieved person under any statute to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment” for “Attorney General under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment”, and “on account of race or color, or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title” for “on account of race or color”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 94–73 substituted “Attorney General or an aggrieved person under any statute to enforce the voting guarantees of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that violations of the fourteenth or fifteenth amendment” for “Attorney General under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that violations of the fifteenth amendment” and “on account of race or color, or in contravention of the voting guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title” for “on account of race or color”.

### Transfer of Functions

“Director of the Office of Personnel Management” substituted for “United States Civil Service Commission” in subsec. (a) pursuant to Reorg. Plan No. 2 of 1978, § 102, 43 F.R. 36037, 92 Stat. 3783, set out under section 1101 of Title 5, Government Organization and Employees, which transferred all functions vested by statute in United States Civil Service Commission to Director of Office of Personnel Management (except as otherwise specified), effective Jan. 1, 1979, as provided by section 1–102 of Ex. Ord. No. 12107, Dec. 28, 1978, 44 F.R. 1055, set out under section 1101 of Title 5.