

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

**§ 1973c. Alteration of voting qualifications; procedure and appeal; purpose or effect of diminishing the ability of citizens to elect their preferred candidates**

(a) Whenever a State or political subdivision with respect to which the prohibitions set forth in section 1973b (a) of this title based upon determinations made under the first sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title are in effect shall enact or seek to administer any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect on November 1, 1964, or whenever a State or political subdivision with respect to which the prohibitions set forth in section 1973b (a) of this title based upon determinations made under the second sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title are in effect shall enact or seek to administer any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect on November 1, 1968, or whenever a State or political subdivision with respect to which the prohibitions set forth in section 1973b (a) of this title based upon determinations made under the third sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title are in effect shall enact or seek to administer any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect on November 1, 1972, such State or subdivision may institute an action in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia for a declaratory judgment that such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure neither has the purpose nor will have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color, or in contravention of the guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title, and unless and until the court enters such judgment no person shall be denied the right to vote for failure to comply with such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure: Provided, That such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure may be enforced without such proceeding 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, or upon good cause shown, to facilitate an expedited approval within sixty days after such submission, the Attorney General has affirmatively indicated that such objection will not be made. Neither an affirmative indication by the Attorney General that no objection will be made, nor the Attorney General's failure to object, nor a declaratory judgment entered under this section shall bar a subsequent action to enjoin enforcement of such qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure. In the event the Attorney General affirmatively indicates that no objection will be made within the sixty-day period following receipt of a submission, the Attorney General may reserve the right to reexamine the submission if additional information comes to his attention during the remainder of the sixty-day period which would otherwise require objection in accordance with this section. Any action under this section shall be heard and determined by a court of three judges in accordance with the provisions of section 2284 of title 28 and any appeal shall lie to the Supreme Court.

(b) Any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting that has the purpose of or will have the effect of diminishing the ability of any citizens of the United States on account of race or color, or in contravention of the guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title, to elect their preferred candidates of choice denies or abridges the right to vote within the meaning of subsection (a) of this section.

(c) The term "purpose" in subsections (a) and (b) of this section shall include any discriminatory purpose.

(d) The purpose of subsection (b) of this section is to protect the ability of such citizens to elect their preferred candidates of choice.

(Pub. L. 89–110, title I, § 5, Aug. 6, 1965, 79 Stat. 439; renumbered title I and amended Pub. L. 91–285, §§ 2, 5, June 22, 1970, 84 Stat. 314, 315; Pub. L. 94–73, title II, §§ 204, 206, title IV, § 405, Aug. 6, 1975, 89 Stat. 402, 404; Pub. L. 109–246, § 5, July 27, 2006, 120 Stat. 580.)

## Amendments

2006—Pub. L. 109–246 designated existing provisions as subsec. (a), substituted “neither has the purpose nor will have the effect” for “does not have the purpose and will not have the effect”, and added subsecs. (b) to (d).

1975—Pub. L. 94–73 inserted “or whenever a State or political subdivision with respect to which the prohibitions set forth in section 1973b (a) of this title based upon determinations made under third sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title are in effect shall enact or seek to administer any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect on November 1, 1972,” after 1968, substituted “or upon good cause shown, to facilitate an expedited approval within sixty days after such submission, the Attorney General has affirmatively indicated that such objection will not be made. Neither an affirmative indication by the Attorney General that no objection will be made, nor the Attorney General’s failure to object,” for “except that neither the Attorney General’s failure to object”, and “on account of race or color, or in contravention of the guarantees set forth in section 1973b (f)(2) of this title” for “on account of race or color”, and inserted provisions that in the event the Attorney General affirmatively indicates that no objection will be made within the sixty-day period following receipt of a submission, the Attorney General may reserve the right to examine the submission if additional information comes to his attention during the remainder of the sixty-day period which would otherwise require objection in accordance with this section.

1970—Pub. L. 91–285 inserted “based upon determinations made under the first sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title” after “section 1973b (a) of this title” and “or whenever a State or political subdivision with respect to which the prohibitions set forth in section 1973b (a) of this title based upon determinations made under the second sentence of section 1973b (b) of this title are in effect shall enact or seek to administer any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting different from that in force or effect on November 1, 1968,” after “1964,”.