

Lincoln's Plan

Abraham Lincoln had thought about the process of restoring the Union from the earliest days of the war. His guiding principles were to accomplish the task as rapidly as possible and ignore calls for punishing the South.

In late 1863, Lincoln announced a formal plan for reconstruction:

1. A general amnesty would be granted to all who would take an oath of loyalty to the United States and pledge to obey all federal laws pertaining to [slavery](#)
2. High Confederate officials and military leaders were to be temporarily excluded from the process
3. When one tenth of the number of voters who had participated in the 1860 election had taken the oath within a particular state, then that state could launch a new government and elect representatives to Congress.
- 4.

The states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee rapidly acted to comply with these terms. Despite an early position showing a vindictive streak, Andrew Johnson continued Lincoln's plan for reconstruction when he took office after Lincoln's assassination. Civil governments were set up, except in the state of Texas, after conventions in each state officially abolished slavery, repudiated their debts, and canceled the acts of secession. Representatives were elected to serve in Congress.

However, the Lincoln plan was not acceptable to Congress, which rejected the representatives.

The Radical Republicans' Response to Lincoln's Plan

The [Radical Republicans](#) voiced immediate opposition to [Lincoln's](#) reconstruction plan, objecting to its leniency and lack of protections for freed slaves. Congress refused to accept the rehabilitation of [Tennessee](#), [Arkansas](#), and [Louisiana](#).

In July 1864, Congress passed the Wade-Davis Bill, their own formula for restoring the Union:

1. A state must have a majority within its borders take the oath of loyalty
2. A state must formally abolish [slavery](#)
3. No Confederate officials could participate in the new governments.
- 4.

Lincoln did not approve of this plan and exercised his pocket veto. An angry Congress would later pass the Wade-Davis Manifesto (August 1864), which charged Lincoln with usurping the powers of Congress. This statement would have little impact on the public, as the military news from the South improved; [Sherman's Atlanta Campaign](#) restored Lincoln's popularity and helped assure his reelection.

Johnson's Plan

The looming showdown between Lincoln and the Congress over competing reconstruction plans never occurred. The president was [assassinated](#) on April 14, 1865. His successor, [Andrew Johnson](#) of Tennessee, lacked his predecessor's skills in handling people; those skills would be badly missed. Johnson's plan envisioned the following:

- Pardons would be granted to those taking a loyalty oath
- No pardons would be available to high Confederate officials and persons owning property valued in excess of \$20,000
- A state needed to abolish [slavery](#) before being readmitted
- A state was required to repeal its secession ordinance before being readmitted.

Most of the seceded states began compliance with the president's program. Congress was not in session, so there was no immediate objection from that quarter. However, Congress reconvened in December and refused to seat the Southern representatives. Reconstruction had produced another deadlock between the president and Congress.

Charles Sumner quote regarding Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction Plan

"This is one of the last great battles with slavery. Driven from the legislative chambers, driven from the field of war, this monstrous power has found a refuge in the executive mansion, where, in utter disregard of the *Constitution* and laws, it seeks to exercise its ancient, far-reaching sway. All this is very plain. Nobody can question it. Andrew Johnson is the impersonation of the tyrannical slave power. In him it lives again."
(Statement made during the debate on impeachment.)

The Radical Republicans' Own Plan

The postwar [Radical Republicans](#) were motivated by three main factors:

1. Revenge — a desire among some to punish the South for causing the war
2. Concern for the freedmen — some believed that the federal government had a role to play in the transition of freedmen from [slavery](#) to freedom
3. Political concerns — the Radicals wanted to keep the Republican Party in power in both the North and the South.

On the political front, the Republicans wanted to maintain their wartime agenda, which included support for:

- Protective [tariffs](#)
- Pro-business national banking system
- Liberal land policies for settlers
- Federal aid for railroad development

If the South were to fall back into Democratic hands, these programs would suffer. This threat brought many Republicans around to supporting the vote for blacks ([15th Amendment](#)). Grateful freedmen voting Republican would help to maintain the status quo.

The postwar Congress pushed through a number of measures designed to assist the freedmen, but also demonstrate the supremacy of Congress over the president. These measures included the [Civil Rights Act of 1866](#), the [14th Amendment](#), the [Tenure of Office Act](#) and the Army Appropriations Act.

The culmination of this process occurred in 1867 and 1868, when Congress passed a series of Reconstruction Acts; these measures were implemented and constituted the final restoration program for the South. The Radical Republicans in Congress, however, were not satisfied until they dealt with their chief tormenter through the impeachment process.