# Civic Action and Change

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- explain how civic action can effect change.
- explain how citizens communicate with public officials (protest, petition, sit-ins, etc.).
- compare and contrast views on a contemporary issue.
- describe opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and to monitor and influence government.
- describe three steps involved in civic action: inform, act and maintain the message.
- discuss the movements for the following groups: women, the disabled, Native Americans and migrant workers.

## Time Needed

One class period

## Materials Needed

- Overhead or white board
- Projector w/PowerPoint (optional)

## Copy Instructions

- Anticipation Activity (1/2 class set, divide into halves to distribute)
- Reading (2 pages; class set)
- Sequence Activity and Review (2 pages; class set, may be double-sided)
- Sequence Cut Out (class set, single sided)
- Extension Activity (1 page; class set)

## Step by Step

- **Distribute** half sheets and have students read through the situations and make their selections.
- **Anticipate** the lesson by discussing the various ways people can approach a problem in their community and what choices students made during the activity.
- **Distribute** the reading pages to the class.
- **Read** the first page with the class.
- **Project** the I AM chart using the projection master or the slide in the PowerPoint presentation.
- **Discuss** the “I AM” format for civic action with students before reading the second reading page with the students. Ask where in the process the successes occur, which part takes the longest, which part is the hardest, which needs the most people involved, etc.
- **Read** the second page with the class.
- **Distribute** the blank sequencing activity and cut out pages. Review the directions and have the students cut and paste the content into the correct areas on the chart.
- **Discuss** the completed chart and the correct answers using the Teacher Guide or the PowerPoint presentation.
- **Check** for understanding using the post-cut out activity true/false informal assessment found in the Teacher Guide or the Power Point presentation.
- **Distribute** and assign the review worksheet.
- **Extend** the lesson by distributing the blank I AM activity page and having students create their own chart using a local problem or a current civil rights issue. You may also fill this in as a class.

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This lesson plan is part of the Civil Rights series by iCivics, Inc. a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing civic education. Visit www.icivics.org/teachers for more lessons and to access the state standards aligned to this lesson plan. Provide feedback to feedback@icivics.org.

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Civic Action and Change

**Take Action!**  
Read the situations and check the actions that you think would be the most effective way of making a positive change.

**Situation One:** There are too many stray cats and dogs in your town! Which **two** things would you do?

- Hold a bake sale to raise money for the local animal shelter.
- Write an editorial for the newspaper telling readers about the problems homeless animals face.
- Convince local veterinarians to donate their time for a spay and neuter clinic once a month.
- Set up an adoption service to take animals off the streets and into loving homes.
- Put food out on your back porch.

**Situation Two:** Kids in school are getting into fights more often than ever! What **two** actions would you help with?

- Have a rally at the school where a guest talks about non-violence and how to cool down.
- Volunteer as a mentor for younger students and discuss ways to deal with anger.
- Share information about teen violence with the students in your school.
- Ask the school board to add a class about anger management and communication skills to the curriculum.
- Try to get into fewer arguments with your friends and family.

**Anticipation Activity**
INFORM
Get information on what the facts are, what problems exist, and who can help make the change you want.

What acronym do these three words create?

_______________!

ACT
Bring attention to the cause through protests, meetings, and petitions. Inform the public. Get laws passed that address your problems & meet your goals.

Give an example of something you can do in this step.

MAINTAIN
Major change takes time. Continue to fight for change by keeping informed and staying focused. One success can lead to another.

Give an example of something you can do in this step.
Recipe for Change

Civic action describes all the things people do to bring about social and political change. A democracy like ours is based on citizens engaging the government. When people take civic action, the government responds. Civic action can involve a million people marching in Washington, D.C. or a few people calling attention to a problem in their own hometown. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a time when thousands of Americans were fighting for change, and their civic action was highly visible in the news media. Civic action still happens every day. Have you heard or seen any recent examples?

Civic Action Requires a Plan

Activism happens when people see a problem, gather together with a set of goals, and make a plan. Sometimes civic action plans take place at the local level. For example, people might set a goal to turn an abandoned lot into a playground. To achieve a bigger goal, such as getting a law changed, the group will need to take their plan to the state or national level and get lawmakers to listen.

Civic Action is a Process

Civic action on the state or national level isn’t like a school project that is over in a few weeks. It takes years or even decades to make changes in government and society. Think about all the work involved! First, a group that wants change must educate the public and lawmakers about the problems that exist. Sometimes this means changing peoples’ attitudes and misconceptions. Then, the group must work to get laws passed, make sure the laws are carried out correctly, and maybe even defend the laws against challenges in the courts. It takes all three branches of the government to make change, as well as the “fourth branch”—citizens!

Three Steps of Civic Action

Every group or person may have a different goal for change, but the process they will go through to make change is always the same. Civic action has three main steps:

**INFORM**
Get information on what the facts are, what problems exist, and who can help make the change you want.

**ACT**
Bring attention to the cause through protests, meetings, and petitions. Inform the public. Get laws passed to address problems & meet your goals.

**MAINTAIN**
Major change takes time. Continue to fight for change by keeping informed and staying focused. Meet resistance. One success can lead to another!

What acronym do these three words create?
______ _______ _______!
Civic Action and Change

Women

Today it is hard to imagine that not so long ago, women in the United States had no political or social rights. For example, they were not allowed to vote, own property, attend college, or even be doctors or lawyers. In 1848, the first women’s convention met to discuss the need for change. These meetings grew into what became the Women’s Rights Movement. Thanks to that hard work, women got the right to vote when the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920.

In the 1960s, women’s rights activists focused on a woman’s right to privacy and on equal opportunities for women at school and at work. For example, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 promised equal pay for equal work. Employers were prohibited from discriminating based on gender. They also could not discriminate against women who were pregnant or had young children. Modern women continue to face equality issues, and many national groups are fighting for women’s equality.

Farm Workers

In the late 1960s, migrant farm workers began to bring awareness to the poor working and living conditions of minorities who worked for large producers. They created the United Farm Workers Union so the workers would be able to organize. This group to made demands for improved conditions. The UFW organized the most successful boycott in history when they convinced people to stop buying grapes. After five years, vineyard owners were forced to sign labor contracts protecting workers’ rights. The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act of 1983 put some key laws in place to protect farm workers from employer abuse, but many problems continue. The movement to protect farm workers’ rights is still very active today.

People with Disabilities

Over 50 million people in the United States have at least one physical, mental, or learning disability. These disabilities have been the basis for discrimination in public places, schools, and jobs. Disabled people also had limited access to public services like transportation.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate against people because of their race, religion, or gender—but not because of disability. People with disabilities fought for their rights by talking to their elected representatives, writing letters and articles, and trying to meet with lawmakers. When companies and individuals refused to meet with them, disability rights activists used more extreme actions to have their concerns heard. You will learn about the two major laws that came out of this movement later in the lesson.

American Indians

In the 1960s and 1970s, Native Americans living on reservations were faced with extreme unemployment, lack of health care and education services, and very poor living conditions. The Native history and lifestyle were constantly challenged by new laws and threats to the land on which the people lived. Activists fought for equal treatment and protection of traditional ways by bringing attention to these injustices. As a result of their work, Congress passed laws protecting Indian land. Successful court challenges led to protection for Native American hunting and fishing areas.
Sequencing Activity

Directions: Cut out the 10 boxes and glue to the IAM worksheet in the correct order. Read each box carefully to see how these movements met specific goals.

Problems
- Girls lacked sports teams and after school activities at school because schools focused their money on boys’ activities.
- Women were discriminated against when they applied for college & jobs.

Groups used court cases, petitions, protests, and Congressional hearings to pressure the government to create a law that gives women and girls equal access to educational and extracurricular activities.

Facts
- 19% of the population in the U.S. has at least one disability.
- 8% of kids under 15 are disabled.
- Disabled people make up the largest minority group in the U.S.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President Bush in 1990. It banned discrimination based on disability in employment, public services, transportation, and communication. It also helped define a disability as an impairment that limits one or more major life activities.

Getting Title IX passed was a huge victory, but was met with resistance by many. The athletic part of the law required that there be equal funding and opportunity for male and female athletic teams. Coaches and supporters of male teams stated that funding for male sports teams suffered and that there was now discrimination against the guys!

These arguments against Title IX have been dismissed by the court system, but the subject is still controversial. Supporters of the law continue to watch and make sure that women get equal opportunities in school and in athletics.

Title IX (9) was signed into law by President Nixon in 1972. It banned gender discrimination in all education programs and extracurricular activities in schools funded by the government. Now 40% of high school sports players and 57% of college students are female!

In 1971, girls made up only 7% of high school sports participants.
That same year, 42% of college students were women.

People with disabilities wrote 'Discrimination Diaries” that talked about daily experiences with barriers and discrimination and sent them to lawmakers. Activists also blocked Greyhound buses demanding wheelchair lifts.

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POST-CUT OUT ACTIVITY
INFORMAL ASSESSMENT — TRUE/FALSE

Directions: After the class has completed the cut out activity, read each true or false statement aloud to the class. Have the class answer “true” or “false” as a chorus or show you “thumbs up” for true and “thumbs down” for false. Use each statement as an opportunity for quick discussion and review before moving on.

This activity is also available as a quiz on the Civic Action and Change PowerPoint.

1. Getting a law passed usually solves the entire problem. (F — those with disabilities still had to educate people to understand their needs)

2. Even after changes have been made, it can still be necessary to watch for problems. (T — title IX supporters still watch to make sure girls are treated equally)

3. A situation is unfair only when a majority of people have a problem. (F — Only 19% of the population has a disability.)

4. People who are fighting for change usually face opposition. (T — many people opposed equal funding for girls’ sports)

5. People must take action to get lawmakers’ attention. (T — people protest, sign petitions, send letters to lawmakers, etc.)

6. The Americans with Disabilities Act dramatically increased the number of girls playing school sports. (F — Title IX)

7. Just because change is enacted doesn’t mean everyone accepts it right away. (T — people must follow the law, but even today some oppose Title IX and aren’t sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities)

8. Sometimes a problem is too big for one law to fix. (T — the ADA didn’t address kids’ access to education; IDEAL did)

9. No matter what people do, the government will never take action. (F — with enough pressure and awareness, groups can cause the government to act)

10. Thanks to Title IX, people with disabilities face fewer barriers and less discrimination. (F — ADA)
Civic Action and Change

A. Vocabulary: Select the best synonym for the underlined word in each sentence.

___ 1. Discrimination is one form of unfairness.  
   A. discrimination  
   B. awareness  
   C. injustice

___ 2. All of the groups in this lesson faced unequal treatment.  

___ 3. Protests and boycotts creates public understanding about a civil rights cause.

B. Make it Accessible! Look at each image. Decide whom each accommodation helps and how it helps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Helps Whom?</th>
<th>Helps How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laws that allow guide dogs inside public places.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramps as an alternative to stairs or steps.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumpy pavement beside train tracks or roads.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. And in This Corner... Every group met opposition during its fight for change. Match each movement with its opposition.

The Movement

___1. The Equal Pay Act 1963 made it illegal for men and women to get paid different wages for doing similar work.

___2. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires all buildings used by the public to be accessible for the disabled.

___3. After court cases involving Native American land rights the US government allowed tribes to hunt and fish on their reservation and on land that had been taken away and sold to white settlers.

___4. The Agricultural Worker Protection Act of 1983 required safe transportation and housing for migrant farm workers and made employers tell workers they will receive in exchange for their labor.

The Opposition

A. Changing existing buildings, especially old ones, is really expensive. The government is not helping pay for the changes that have to be made.

B. Other countries don’t have strict labor laws. We can’t compete with their cheap fruits and veggies if we have to spend money on houses and buses!

C. Women miss more work because they are usually the ones to stay home when a kid is sick. They also take maternity leave when having a baby.

D. It is not fair that some Americans can use land when other Americans are not allowed. Being a part of one group shouldn’t give them more rights.
Civic Action and Change

**Directions:** Create your own I AM chart. Complete this chart by answering the questions and thinking like a civil rights mover and shaker!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inform!</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facts and Figures: What is the situation?</td>
<td>Issue: What is the problem?</td>
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<td>Message: What do you need to say? Who needs to hear it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action: How will you take the message to the audience? (You can write it and draw it!)</td>
<td>Keep it Up! What is the next step for your movement? How do you continue your work?</td>
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Title: ___________________________
**Sequencing Activity**

**Facts**

- In 1971, girls made up only 7% of high school sports participants.
- That same year, 42% of college students were women.

**Problems**

- Girls lacked sports teams and after-school activities at school because schools focused their money on boys' activities.
- Women were discriminated against when they applied for college and jobs.

Groups used court cases, petitions, protests, and Congressional hearings pressuring the government to create a law that gives women and girls equal access to educational and extracurricular activities.

**Title IX** was signed into law by President Nixon in 1972. It banned discrimination in education programs and extracurricular activities in schools funded by the government. Now 49% of high school sports players and 73% of college students are female, and 51% of women in the labor force have a college degree.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** was signed into law by President Bush in 1990. It banned discrimination based on disability in employment, public services, transportation, and communication. People with disabilities make up 18% of the population in the US and 1/4 of the population in the US is at least one disabled. The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** was signed into law by President Bush in 1990. It banned discrimination based on disability in employment, public services, transportation, and communication. People with disabilities make up 18% of the population in the US and 1/4 of the population in the US is at least one disabled.

**Passing ADA** didn’t fix everything. Passing ADA didn’t fix everything. Passing ADA didn’t fix everything.

**Inform**

- Opposing viewpoints in school and in athletics.
- And make sure that women get equal opportunities in school and in athletics.

Getting Title IX passed was a huge victory, but it wasn’t without challenges. Women were discriminated against when they applied for college and jobs.

The government, now 49% of high school sports players and 73% of college students are female, and 51% of women in the labor force have a college degree.

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**ACT**

**Facts**

- Disabled students need appropriate public education that meets a student’s needs. The government to create a law that gives disabled students needs.

Disabled students need appropriate public education that meets a student’s needs. The government needs to do more to ensure that disabled students have equal opportunities in education.

**People with Disabilities**

- Largest minority group in the US
- 1 in 10 kids between the ages of 6 and 14 are disabled.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the US. 1 in 10 kids between the ages of 6 and 14 are disabled.

**Women**

- Against women.
- 4% of college students are female.
- High school sports are gender-specific.

Women’s sports programs are smaller than men’s, and women are discriminated against in college sports and in the workforce.

The same year, 42% of college students were women. Women are discriminated against in college sports and in the workforce.
A. Vocabulary: Select the best synonym for the underlined word in each sentence.

C. 1. Discrimination is one form of unfairness.  
A. discrimination  
B. awareness  
C. injustice

A. 2. All of the groups in this lesson faced unequal treatment.  
A. discrimination  
B. awareness  
C. injustice

B. 3. Protests and boycotts creates public understanding about a civil rights cause.  
A. discrimination  
B. awareness  
C. injustice

B. Make it Accessible! Look at each image. Decide whom each accommodation helps and how it helps.

Student answers may vary, but note the descriptions provided below.

**Laws that allow guide dogs inside public places.** Service animals are trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities like guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs or other special tasks. They are working animals, not pets.

**Closed captioning prints what is being said on TV.** This addition allows the hearing impaired to watch TV and read what is being said. This service is available on most TVs.

**Ramps as an alternative to stairs or steps.** This bus has been modified by adding a wheelchair ramp at the entrance. The ramp allows people who cannot walk up steps to enter the bus easily.

**Bumpy pavement beside train tracks or roads.** Adding bumpy pavement near train and subway rails helps the visually impaired to locate the end of the platform. Sidewalks at intersections use this technique too.

C. And in This Corner… Every group met opposition during its fight for change. Match each movement with its opposition.

The Movement

C. 1. The **Equal Pay Act 1963** made it illegal for men and women to get paid different wages for doing similar work.

A. Changing existing buildings, especially old ones, is really expensive. The government is not helping pay for the changes that have to be made.

B. Other countries don’t have strict labor laws. We can’t compete with their cheap fruits and veggies if we have to spend money on houses and buses!

D. Women miss more work because they are usually the ones to stay home when a kid is sick. They also take maternity leave when having a baby.

B. 2. The **Americans with Disabilities Act** requires all buildings used by the public to be accessible for the disabled.

A. It is not fair that some Americans can use land when other Americans are not allowed. Being a part of one group shouldn’t give them more rights.

D. After court cases involving **Native American land rights** the US government allowed tribes to hunt and fish on their reservation and on land that had been taken away and sold to white settlers.

C. Women miss more work because they are usually the ones to stay home when a kid is sick. They also take maternity leave when having a baby.

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The Opposition
I AM! Create your own I AM chart! Complete this chart by answering the questions and thinking like a civil rights mover and shaker!

**Title:** Science Lab Supplies

### Inform!

**Facts and Figures:** What is the situation?
- all of the science lab equipment is old
- it will cost at least $5,000 to upgrade the lab

**Issue:** What is the problem?
- The school budget can’t afford to buy new supplies and equipment.
- Students cannot get the best science education without quality labs.

**Goal:** What is the solution?
- Get money to buy supplies and equipment by fundraising and donations.
- Have some money and/or materials donated by local businesses.

### Act!

**Message:** What do you need to say? Who needs to hear it?
- **Audience:** parents, community members, local business owners
- **Message:** We need help to improve our science education! Support students in science.

**Outcome:** What does the change look like?
- Success will be a science lab stocked with working equipment and enough supplies for all students to participate in experiments and labs.

### Maintain!

**Action:** How will you take the message to the audience? (You can write it and draw it!)
- Write editorials in the local newspaper that talks about the sad state of the science lab.
- Hold bake sales and car washes to raise money for the lab materials.
- Write to local businesses owners asking for donations of money or supplies for the lab.

**Keep it Up! What is the next step for your movement? How do you continue your work?**
- Attend future school board meetings to advocate for more funding for the science classes.
- Let your supporters know about your successes and plans for future activities to improve your school.