



EQUALITY & CIVIL RIGHTS

A number of measures passed by Democrats and signed into law by Gov. Janet Mills expand protections of civil rights and equality for all Mainers.

- **Racial equality in the criminal justice system.** In 2020, shocked by the killing of George Floyd, Gov. Mills and the Maine Supreme Judicial Court announced a plan to [root out racism](#) in Maine's criminal justice system, including a review of Maine's law enforcement policies and statutes, targeting racial profiling, and providing legislative guidance for future laws.
- **Addressing racial disparities.** Democrats [passed legislation](#) to create and [fund](#) the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, which will develop recommendations to address racial disparities across all systems. Another measure will allow legislators to [measure the impact](#) of proposed legislation on historically disadvantaged populations, enhancing the state's ability to eliminate systemic racism.
- **Historical state Supreme Court appointment.** In March, 2022, Gov. Mills nominated Rick Lawrence to the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, the first Black justice to serve on that court. He was [confirmed unanimously](#).
- **Protections for LGBTQ+ civil rights.** Democrats passed a number of bills to [protect LGBTQ+ rights](#), among them a measure making it illegal to [deny health coverage](#) based on gender identity. They also passed a [ban on conversion therapy](#) and a bill to provide a pathway to a discharge [upgrade for veterans](#) who were less than honorably discharged solely on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, enabling them to access full VA benefits.
- **Women's Rights.** Gov. Mills has been a staunch supporter of women's rights since her election. She has supported amending Maine's Constitution with a Equal Rights Amendment, a measure blocked by Republicans. When the Supreme Court overturned abortion rights, [Mills vowed to protect](#) reproductive rights in Maine. She also signed an [executive order](#) to safeguard reproductive healthcare rights and support healthcare providers.
- **Tribal Rights.** Democrats passed a [measure](#) that expands the Penobscot Nation's and Passamaquoddy Tribe's jurisdiction over prosecuting criminal offenses on their reservations, provides tax exemptions for tribal members working and doing business on tribal lands, expands provisions for tribal-state collaboration and allows for some tribal gaming. Democrats also enacted legislation that will enable the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik to address [contamination of the Tribe's water supply](#), replaces Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day, and [bans](#) Maine public schools from using Indian-themed mascots.
- **Immigration.** Gov. Mills' [approach toward immigration](#) has been the polar opposite of her predecessor. She has reversed many of Gov. LePage's policies, highlighting the economic and moral imperative of welcoming immigrants, migrants and asylum seekers to Maine and encouraging business, education and housing policies supportive of immigrants.