

# Priceless: The Over \$5.6 Billion Impact of Equal Opportunity at Work

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Just off the heels of the [Equal Pay Act of 1963](#), which outlawed unequal pay on the basis of sex, 1964 was a landmark year during which civil rights leaders witnessed the culmination of centuries of resilience, ambition, perseverance and commitment to equality come to fruition. 1964 was one of the nation's most monumental years, marked by some inspiring moments, such as peaceful [sit-ins and protests](#) across the nation calling for integration, and some harrowing ones, from the tragic [murder of civil rights activists](#) (by the [terrorist organization](#) – the Ku Klux Klan), to rallies held in former [slave markets](#) and [public streets](#).

That summer, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, dawning an era of equality for more people: women and men, people of color, those of diverse faiths and countries of origin. The law also served as an attempt to remedy those past, unfathomable injustices. Within the Civil Rights Act sits Title VII, which made employment discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, religion and national origin illegal. While momentous, the expansion of legal rights still did not extend to all – specifically disabled people and LGBTQ+ persons.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 also established the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a five-member, bipartisan commission with the mission to eliminate unlawful employment discrimination for workers. The EEOC's key responsibility is enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's:

1. Race
2. Color
3. Religion
4. Sex
5. National Origin
6. Age (40 or older)
7. Disability
8. Genetic Information

Throughout its 60-year existence, the EEOC has supported thousands of workers who have suffered unlawful workplace discrimination by advocating on their behalf and obtaining monetary relief for those victims.

## 1. The EEOC has recovered billions for workers who have suffered discrimination

From 2014-2024, the EEOC recovered \$5.6 billion for workers who were discriminated against.<sup>1</sup> In fiscal year 2024, the EEOC:

- Recovered nearly **\$700 million** for victims of discrimination, including:
  - Approximately **\$496.6 million for 13,516 victims** of employment discrimination in the private sector and state and local government workplaces through mediation, conciliation and settlements;
  - More than **\$190 million** for 3,041 federal employees and applicants;
  - Over **\$40 million** for 4,304 individuals as a direct result of litigation.
- Brought **88,531 new discrimination charges** and addressed inquiries from:
  - More than 553,000 calls to the agency's contact center
  - 90,000 emails
- Filed **111 new lawsuits**, including:
  - 76 suits on behalf of individuals
  - 13 systemic suits involving multiple victims or discriminatory policies
- Resolved 132 lawsuits and achieved **favorable results** such as reaching a settlement agreement or via consent decree, **in 97% of all suit resolutions**

At the same time that the EEOC first opened its doors, President Johnson issued Executive Order 11246, which prohibited employment discrimination by organizations that receive federal contracts and subcontracts and has been expanded to prohibit discrimination based on sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy. The Secretary of the Department of Labor established the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to enforce EO 11246, and, in subsequent years, OFCCP's mandate was expanded by Congress to also enforce the following:

- Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating against individuals with disabilities.
- Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, which prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating against veterans and requires employers take action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans.

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated by the National Partnership for Women & Families

Combined with Executive Order 11246, these laws outlaw discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity and pregnancy) disability, and veteran status.

Today, OFCCP has jurisdiction over approximately 25,000 firms, where 20% of the American workforce are employed. In contrast to the EEOC, the OFCCP has the ability to conduct more comprehensive, systematic reviews of pay inequities, allowing the agency to detect patterns of discrimination that individual employees may not otherwise detect.

## **2. Over the last decade, the OFCCP has worked fervently to recover monetary relief for employees and job seekers of federal contractors who were discriminated against.**

From 2014 to 2024, the OFCCP has: <sup>2</sup>

- Obtained **over \$260.8 million** for employees and job seekers who were discriminated against
- Obtained financial relief for **over 250,900** employees and job seekers
- Secured **over 22,600** job opportunities and salary adjustments for individuals who had suffered discrimination

In 2020, Wells Fargo Bank entered into a conciliation agreement with the OFCCP in which the bank agreed to pay **\$7,800,000** in back wages and interest to resolve allegations of hiring discrimination. The OFCCP alleged that Wells Fargo discriminated against over 30,000 African American applicants for banking, customer sales and service, and administrative support positions at locations nationwide and 308 female applicants for administrative support positions.

In 2019, the OFCCP entered into a conciliation agreement with Dell Technologies to resolve allegations of race and gender-based wage discrimination. Under the terms of the agreement, Dell Technologies provided relief to the affected workers totaling **\$7 million** in lost wages, interest, and benefits.

Two years prior, in 2017 the OFCCP entered into a consent decree with Palantir Technologies Inc. to resolve charges of systemic hiring discrimination. The decree settles allegations that Palantir Technologies discriminated against Asian applicants in the hiring and selection process for engineering positions. Under the terms of the decree, Palantir paid **\$1,659,434** in back wages to the affected class and extended job offers to eight eligible class members.

The OFCCP has been essential to the resolution and remedying of workplace discrimination across the nation. In addition to recovery efforts for workers, the OFCCP also served as a

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<sup>2</sup> This information has since been removed from the Department of Labor's website and is on file with the National Partnership for Women & Families.

watchdog for employment discrimination. The OFCCP has used annual audits to ensure that companies who work with the federal government are complying with equal opportunity laws. Last year, the OFCCP published its Corporate Scheduling Announcement list, and of the 500 companies listed, a few [notable names](#) were selected for the OFCCP's employment discrimination audits: Amazon, Google and Tesla.

### **3. Without these agencies, victims of workplace discrimination are left without the necessary tools that help eliminate discrimination.**

While most businesses do foster supportive and inclusive workplaces, the data also makes it clear that a number of businesses do and will continue to engage in illegal discrimination. There is no question that the EEOC and the OFCCP have been instrumental in preventing and remedying discrimination in the workplace for all workers over decades. Both the EEOC and OFCCP have demonstrated their necessity and value – they are and have always been essential to protecting workers from gross, unlawful and cruel discrimination. All workers deserve to thrive in their workplaces, regardless of their race, gender, disability, veteran status, and more.

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