Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hour \_\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Legislation to Create the Great Society**

When President Johnson announced his Great Society program in 1964, he promised substantial reductions in the number of Americans living in poverty. When he left office, he could legitimately argue that he had delivered on his promise. In 1960, 40 million Americans, 20 percent of the population, were classified as poor. By 1969, their number had fallen to 24 million, 12 percent of the population. Johnson also pledged to qualify the poor for new and better jobs, to extend health insurance to the poor and elderly to cover hospital and doctor costs, and to provide better housing for low-income families. Here too Johnson could say he had delivered. Infant mortality among the poor, which had barely declined between 1950 and 1965, fell by one third in the decade after 1965 as a result of expanded federal medical and nutritional programs. Before 1965, 20 percent of the poor had never seen a doctor; by 1970 the figure had been cut to 8 percent. The proportion of families living in houses lacking indoor plumbing also declined steeply, from 20 percent in 1960 to 11 percent a decade later.

Although critics argued that Johnson took a shotgun approach to reform and pushed poorly thought-out bills through Congress, supporters responded that at least Johnson tried to move toward a more compassionate society. During the 1960s median black family income rose 53 percent; black employment in professional, technical, and clerical occupations doubled; and average black educational attainment increased by four years. The proportion of blacks below the poverty line fell from 55 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1968. The black unemployment rate fell 34 percent. The country had taken major strides toward extending equality of opportunity to black Americans. In addition, the number of whites below the poverty line dropped dramatically, and such poverty-plagued regions as Appalachia made significant economic strides.

In his first State of the Union address as an elected president, Johnson outlined the Great Society, his own extensive legislative program to raise the quality of American life. The program soon began to materialize in one of the most fruitful legislative eras in U.S. history. Congress, against muted opposition, enacted a new housing bill, a Medicare program to help provide medical care for the elderly, and additional antipoverty measures. Other legislation protected the voting rights of southern blacks, created a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, and abolished the immigration quota system. Johnson’s appropriation bills for secondary and higher education—a pet project of the former schoolteacher—sent aid to almost every school system in the country.

Although he had lost some momentum by 1966, Johnson signed bills creating the National Teachers Corps and the Model Cities urban redevelopment program. In 1967 and 1968, despite diminished Democratic majorities in Congress, the administration succeeded in gaining passage of an open-housing civil rights bill and important education, gun-control, and conservation measures. In all, Congress had implemented 226 of Johnson’s 252 legislative requests by the expiration of his term.

**Key Legislation to Create the Great Society**

**War on Poverty:**

**The Economic Opportunity Act 1964**

* Provided **training** to disadvantaged **youths** aged 16-21
* Helped **low income students** to work their way through college
* Recruited **volunteers** to work and teach in low income slum areas

**City Improvements–The Re-Development Act 1964**

* Provided money for replacing **inner city slums** with new homes.

**Medicare and Medicaid 1965**

* This provided medical insurance for the **over-65s** and hospital cover for the **poor**

**Environmental Protection 1963 to 1967**

* A series of laws to try and ensure **clear water** and enforce **air quality** standards

**\*However, all Johnson’s attempts to create the ‘Great Society’ were undermined by the high costs of the war against Vietnam.**

**Great Society Legislation:**

**1964**

* The 24th Amendment banned poll tax in federal elections
* Tax Reduction Act
* Civil Rights Act of 1964
* Urban Mass Transportation Act
* Economic Opportunity Act
* Wilderness Preservation Act

**1965**

* Elementary and Secondary School Act ($1 billion for public schools and $100 million for purchase of library and textbooks
* Medicare
* Medicaid
* Voting Rights Act which put an end to literacy tests; established voting registrars which could be sent to locales which had a history of denying people the right to vote

**1965 (continued…)**

* Omnibus Housing Act provided $7.5 billion for low-income housing and aid to small businesses displaced by urban renewal
* Department of Housing and Urban Development established
* National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities including the National Endowment for the
* Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities
* Water Quality Act
* Immigration laws revised so that immigration would be based on skills needed instead of ethnicity or nationality.
* Air Quality Act created auto emission standards
* Higher Education Act which gave increased support to colleges and universities
* Affirmative Action established by executive order

**1966**

* National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act Highway Safety Act
* Minimum Wage raised and coverage extended
* Department of Transportation established
* Model Cities program to rehabilitate urban slums
* Public Broadcasting System

**1968**

* Truth-in-Lending act

**Source: http://faculty.weber.edu/kmackay/great%20society.htm**