

## Government Agencies

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### Office of Indian Affairs 1824

The Office of Indian Affairs was created on March 11, 1824. It originally had been a part of the Department of War in the Cabinet. It is the main agency of the federal government in charge of the displacement of lands the United States holds for American Indians and Indian tribes. When the factory trading system ended in 1822, the United States sought a way to help manage the affairs of the American Indians. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun created the Office of Indian Affairs, but he did not have the approval of Congress. Calhoun had to present the proposal to Congress in 1826, and Congress finally approved it that year. Thomas McKenney, who had previously been in charge of the factory trading system, was put in charge of the Office of Indian Affairs. McKenney's responsibility was to be involved in all transactions that were Indian related and to help improve the quality of Indian relations between the tribes and the citizens of the United States.

### Freedmen's Bureau 1865

The Freedmen's Bureau was created on March 3, 1865, as a federal agency to help and protect African Americans recently freed through the Emancipation Proclamation. It was originally the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. The bureau was established to be in place for only one year. President Andrew Johnson attempted to obtain a lifetime extension for the Freedmen's Bureau and grant it additional powers in 1866, but Congress denied this measure. A form of this legislation later passed, and General Oliver O. Howard served as the commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. Howard divided the former slave and border states into ten districts. The bureau helped to provide relief work jobs for blacks and whites in poor areas. The Freedmen's Bureau ensured there was no discrimination against blacks in their new work places or in court. The bureau also helped to educate African Americans.

### **Similarities**

The purpose of these federal agencies was to protect and ensure the rights of two significantly different groups of people. In the United States American Indians and African Americans had been oppressed for many years. The American government wanted to initiate legislation to correct the previous injustices. In addition, these federal agencies would serve these people in many different ways such as finding employment and even granting land. The agencies also would ensure that neither group would be subject to discrimination. Government officials wanted American Indians and African Americans to assimilate into the culture of the United States.

