

Topic Page: [Homestead Act of 1862](#)

Definition: **Homestead Act** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1.

a special act (1862) of the US Congress which made lands in the West available to settlers without payments.



Image from: [An application for a homestead following the 1862... in Landmark Debates in Congress: From the Declaration of Independence to the War in Iraq](#)

Summary Article: **Homestead Act**
From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1862, passed by the U.S. Congress. It provided for the transfer of 160 acres (65 hectares) of unoccupied public land to each homesteader on payment of a nominal fee after five years of residence; land could also be acquired after six months of residence at \$1.25 an acre. The government had previously sold land to settlers in the West for revenue purposes. As the West became politically stronger, however, pressure was increased upon Congress to guarantee free land to settlers (see Foot Resolution; Preemption Act). Several bills providing for free distribution of land were defeated in Congress; in 1860 a bill was passed in Congress but was vetoed by President Buchanan. With the ascendancy of the Republican party (which had committed itself to homestead legislation) and with the secession of the South (which had opposed free distribution of land), the Homestead Act, sponsored by Galusha A. Grow, became law. In 1976 it expired in all the states but Alaska, where it ended in 1986.

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Homestead Act. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/homestead_act_of_1862



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