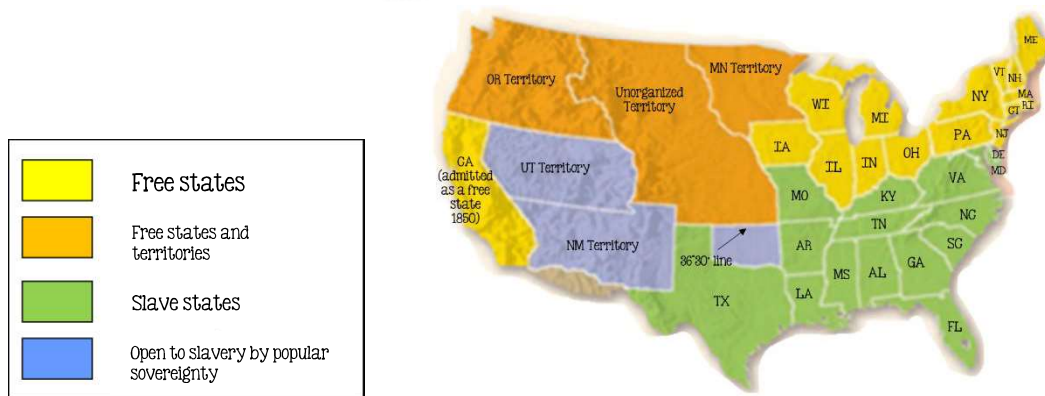


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Compromise of 1850



The Missouri Compromise held the Union together until 1850. Two years after the nation won the Mexican Cession in the U.S.-Mexico War, President Zachary Taylor urged California and New Mexico to apply for statehood. California had strict anti-slave laws to stop slave labor in mines while New Mexico was bound to be a slave state. Southerners were excited because they thought that much of the land could become slave states.

Unfortunately for them, while California followed Taylor's advice and applied for statehood, New Mexico did not, and worse, wanted to become a free state. Adding California would once again throw the balance of free and slave states out of whack.

At the same time, abolitionists were increasingly angry that slavery existed in Washington, D.C. For example, a slave market opened very near the Capitol Building that housed Congress. Abolitionists thought this was disgraceful and a terrible symbol to the world.

Southerners also had a problem: thanks to the Underground Railroad, many of their slaves were running away. The slaves were called **fugitives**. Southerners wanted tougher laws to make northerners help return fugitive slaves.

With no future slave state to balance out California, Southerners were extremely worried. Once the abolitionists controlled Congress, how long would it be until they tried to ban slavery? As a result, Southern states started to talk about seceding from the Union. If they could not have their slaves, they would no longer be part of the United States.

Once again, **Henry Clay** came up with an idea to save the United States. With the support of Illinois Senator **Stephen Douglas**, Clay passed the **Compromise of 1850**, which had three major parts:

- California would enter the Union as a free state
- The slave trade would be abolished in Washington, D.C.
- A new, tougher, Fugitive Slave Law would be passed to help return runaway slaves to their rightful owners