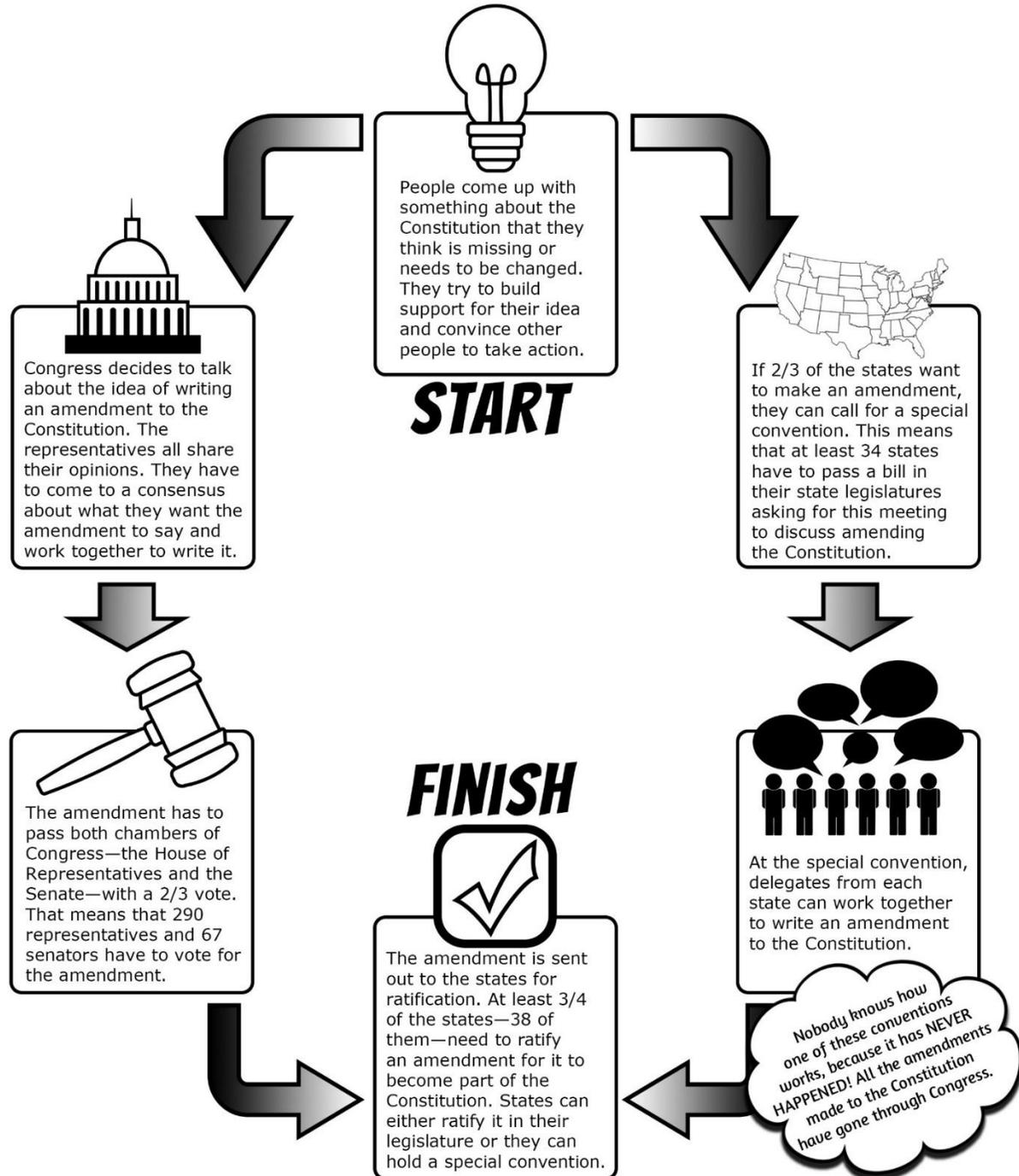




AMENDING THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

When the framers wrote the U.S. Constitution, they knew that the country would grow and change. They included a way to amend, or change, the Constitution to adapt to life in the future. But, they didn't want to make it TOO easy for people to add or change things! The two paths the framers came up with have checks and balances to make sure that any changes have widespread support.



1. What are some of the checks and balances that exist to make sure amendments have widespread support?
2. Why do you think there are two paths to make an amendment?
3. Why do you think the path of the state conventions has never happened?
4. Do you think making an amendment to the Constitution is too easy, too hard, or just right? Why?



Amendments 11–27 to the U.S. Constitution

Amendment 11 (*Passed by Congress March 4, 1794; Ratified February 7, 1795*): states cannot be sued by citizens of another state or from another country

Amendment 12 (*Passed by Congress December 9, 1803; Ratified June 15, 1804*): changed how the President and Vice President are elected

Amendment 13 (*Passed by Congress January 31, 1865; Ratified December 6, 1865*): ended slavery in the United States

Amendment 14 (*Passed by Congress June 13, 1866; Ratified July 9, 1868*): declared that all people born in the United States are citizens and are guaranteed fair treatment under the law

Amendment 15 (*Passed by Congress February 26, 1869; Ratified February 3, 1870*): the right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color, or previous servitude

Amendment 16 (*Passed by Congress July 2, 1909; Ratified February 3, 1913*): allows the federal government to collect income tax

Amendment 17 (*Passed by Congress May 13, 1912; Ratified April 8, 1913*): direct election of senators by the people

Amendment 18 (*Passed by Congress December 18, 1917; Ratified January 16, 1919; Repealed by the 21st Amendment*): banned the making, selling, or transporting alcohol (Prohibition)

Amendment 19 (*Passed by Congress June 4, 1919; Ratified August 18, 1920*): gives women the right to vote

Amendment 20 (*Passed by Congress March 2, 1932; Ratified January 23, 1933*): moves the start of the President's term to January instead of March

Amendment 21 (*Passed by Congress February 20, 1933; Ratified December 5, 1933*): repeals the 18th Amendment and ends prohibition, alcohol is legal again



Amendment 22 (*Passed by Congress March 21, 1947; Ratified February 27, 1951*): limits a president to two four-year terms

Amendment 23 (*Passed by Congress June 16, 1960; Ratified March 29, 1961*): allows the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.) to vote in presidential elections

Amendment 24 (*Passed by Congress August 27, 1962; Ratified January 23, 1964*): bans poll taxes (fees charged to vote)

Amendment 25 (*Passed by Congress July 6, 1965; Ratified February 10, 1967*): details what happens if the President dies or resigns from office

Amendment 26 (*Passed by Congress March 23, 1971; Ratified July 1, 1971*): lowers the voting age from 21 to 18

Amendment 27 (*Proposed Sept. 25, 1789; Ratified May 7, 1992*): legislators cannot vote to give themselves a raise; any raise approved in one legislative term does not take effect until the next term



Amendment Reflections

1. If you were to sort the amendments into categories, which category headings would you choose, and which amendment goes in which category?
2. Are there any periods of time when a lot of changes to the Constitution were being made? Why do you think this happened?
3. Are there any large gaps in time when no amendments were passed? Why do you think that was?
4. What patterns do you notice about the types of laws being passed?
5. Which amendment do you think had the biggest impact on everyday life in America? Why?



Amendment Reflections – Possible Responses

1. If you were to sort the amendments into categories, which category headings would you choose, and which amendment goes in which category?

Answers will vary, but some examples:

- **Amendments about how the government functions (12, 16, 20, 22, 25, 27)**
- **Amendments to ensure people are treated fairly (13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24)**
- **Amendments that say what people can or cannot do (11, 17, 18, 21, 26)**
- **Amendments about voting (12, 15, 17, 19, 23, 26)**
- **Amendments that expand Constitutional roles or definitions (11, 14, 15, 23, 24, 27)**

2. Are there any periods of time when a lot of changes were being made? Why do you think this happened?

1794-1804 was when the new government found there were some ideas and structures they needed to change or that were not originally included.

1865-1870 was right after the Civil War, and Amendments 13-15 are directly linked to slavery ending in the United States.

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of social change – alcohol is banned and then permitted again, the vote was extended to women and D.C., and poll taxes were banned. These sound like amendments groups of people campaigned for rather than the government needing to change something about how it is structured or functions.

3. Are there any large gaps in time when no amendments were passed? Why do you think that was?

There is a large gap from 1870-1909 when there were no amendments passed or ratified. This could be because no one had any ideas that enough people agreed with about something that had to be changed and shows that getting an amendments passed is a long, difficult process.

4. What patterns do you notice about the types of laws being passed?

There are periods of time when the amendments that are passed deal more with the government itself (11-12; 16-17; 20; 22-27) and other times that the amendments are more about the people being governed (13-15; 18-19; 21). I think this probably reflects what was going on in the United States at the time and if people felt like they were being treated fairly or not.

5. Which amendment do you think had the biggest impact on everyday life in America? Why?

Answers will vary.



Considered Constitutional Amendments

These amendments were considered in Congress but not approved. This is not a complete list.

19th Century

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|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1838 | Anyone involved in a duel cannot hold federal office. Considered after one congressman killed another in a duel. |
| 1893 | Rename the United States of America to the United States of Earth. End the Army and the Navy. |

20th Century

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|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1911 | End the Senate. |
| 1912 | People of different races cannot marry each other. |
| 1933 | Put a limit on how much a person can earn in one year. |
| 1995 | Limit the number of terms a congressperson can be reelected. There are currently no limits on the Senate and House of Representatives. The president may serve two four-year terms (22nd Amendment). |

21st Century

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|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2003 | People who have lived in the United States for at least 20 years and become citizens may become president. Currently, a person must have been born in the United States in order to become president. |
| 2017 | The president cannot pardon themselves of a crime. Currently, they can pardon others, and it is uncertain whether they can pardon themselves. |
| 2020 | The Supreme Court can only have nine members. There is currently no limit although there are traditionally nine members. |



Constitutional Amendments Approved by Congress

These amendments were considered and approved by Congress. However, they were not ratified by enough states to become amendments. This is not a complete list.

Amendment	Topic	Status
Titles of Nobility Amendment	Would take citizenship away from any U.S. citizen who accepts a title of nobility from another country.	Pending since May 1, 1810
Equal Rights Amendment	Would outlaw discrimination based on sex. Currently, it is illegal to discriminate based on color, religion, or disability.	Proposed March 22, 1972, but ratification period ended. Status has been questioned, and debate is ongoing.
District of Columbia Voting Rights Amendment	Would treat the District of Columbia like a state in voting for representation in Congress and the process of amending the Constitution. Currently, the people of Washington, D.C., cannot vote on those issues.	Proposed August 22, 1978, but ratification period ended and amendment failed. However, it continues to be debated.