

THE AMENDMENTS

1950–Present: Amendments XXII–XXVII

(See Amendments XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII)

This final group of amendments focuses on the president and American civil rights.

The Twenty-second Amendment, ratified in 1951, limited the amount of terms a president could serve. The Constitution did not put a limit on the number of terms a president could serve. President George Washington had only served two terms, or eight years. Because of his example, or precedent, other presidents only served a maximum of two terms. This changed when Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to a third term in 1940 and a fourth term in 1944. The Twenty-second Amendment limited the president to two terms of office.

Before 1961, citizens of the District of Columbia had no voice in elections, and by the 1960s, the District had a large population that was left out. The Twenty-third Amendment, passed in 1961, gave citizens who lived in the District of Columbia the right to vote in national elections.

In 1964, the Twenty-fourth Amendment was added to the Constitution. Before this amendment, many states would place a tax on voting. In order to vote in an election, you would be forced to pay a poll tax. This amendment prohibited the poll tax.

With the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963, the nation was made more aware of who takes over in the event of an emergency. Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's vice president, took over as president, but there was no vice president to take over in the event Johnson died. The Twenty-fifth Amendment, passed in 1967, allowed the new president to appoint a vice president. The Congress would have to approve this new vice president by a majority vote of both houses. If a president becomes ill, he may temporarily give his powers to the vice president until he has recovered. This amendment

was used in 1973 and 1974 with the resignations of Vice President Agnew and President Nixon. Nixon appointed Gerald Ford to replace Agnew in 1973, then Ford became president in 1974 when Nixon resigned, and he appointed Nelson Rockefeller to be vice president.

The Twenty-sixth Amendment, ratified in 1971, was aimed at the young people of the United States. Many Americans felt that the voting age should be lowered from 21 to 18. So, in 1971, 18-year-olds were given the right to vote.

The final amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified on May 7, 1992. The Twenty-seventh Amendment tells senators and representatives that any changes in their salaries will not take effect until after the next election. This amendment was originally part of the Bill of Rights of 1789, but was not ratified along with the others. It was not until 1992 that it became part of the Constitution!

