**11th Amendment**  
The 11th Amendment came about as a direct result of the Supreme Court decision in *Chisholm v Georgia* (2 U.S. 419) in 1793. Congress felt that the Supreme Court had over stepped its bounds, and feared it would do so again unless prohibited by the Constitution. The *Chisholm* case was decided in 1793, just five years after the adoption of the Constitution. The Amendment was approved by Congress on March 4, 1794, and ratified on February 7, 1795 (340 days). The Amendment limits the jurisdiction of the federal courts to automatically hear cases brought against a state by the citizens of another state. Later interpretations have expanded this to include citizens of the state being sued, as well.

In *Hollingsworth v Virginia* (3 USC 378 [1798]), the passage and ratification of the 11th was challenged for two reasons. First because the President did not sign the amendment bill, and second because the amendment presented a situation where people had some legal relief before ratification that dried up after, creating an ex post facto situation. The Supreme Court rejected both challenges, setting some important precedent for future amendments.

**12th Amendment**  
The Constitution was written before parties were a player in American politics. When John Adams was chosen for President in the 1796 election, the second-place candidate, Thomas Jefferson, became Vice President — but Adams was a Federalist and Jefferson was a Democratic-Republican. The two clashed several times during Adams's presidency, though Adams's conflicts with Hamilton, a Federalist, too, probably caused Adams more concern.

In the election of 1800, the flaws of the original system became more than apparent. Jefferson and Aaron Burr both got 73 votes in the Electoral College, forcing the House of Representatives to choose. The problem? Both Jefferson and Burr were candidates of the same party, with Burr chosen to be the Vice President; some states preferred Burr, and neither was able to get the required majority until the stalemate was ultimately broken.

The result was the 12 Amendment , approved in Congress on December 9, 1803, and ratified on June 15, 1804 (189 days), in time for the new process to be in place for the 1804 election. With the 12th, Electors are directed to vote for a President and for a Vice President rather than for two choices for President.

**13th Amendment**  
Slavery was an institution in America in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Southern states, with their agricultural economies, relied on the slavery system to ensure the cash crops (cotton, hemp, rice, indigo, and tobacco, primarily) were tended and cultivated. Slaves were not unknown in the North, but abolition in the North was completed by the 1830's. In 1808, the Congress prohibited the slave trade, not a year later than allowed in the Constitution. A series of compromises, laws, acts, and bills tried to keep the balance between the slave states and the non-slave states.

South Carolina voted to secede from the United States as a result of Abraham Lincoln's election to the Presidency. Lincoln had, over time, voiced strong objections to slavery, and his incoming administration was viewed as a threat to the right of the states to keep their institutions, particularly that of slavery, the business of the states. More states seceded, eleven in all, forming the Confederate States of America. The secession movement led to the Civil War. In the waning days of the war, which ran from 1861 to 1865, the Congress approved an amendment to abolish slavery in all of the United States. Once the CSA was defeated, approval of the 13th Amendment was quick in the Northern states. By the end of 1865, eight of the eleven Confederate states had also ratified it. Proposed on January 31, 1865, it was ratified on December 6, 1865 (309 days). Eventually, all of the CSA states except Mississippi ratified the 13th after the war; Mississippi ratified the amendment in 1995.

**14th Amendment**

The ratification of the 13th Amendment was a major victory for the North, and it was hoped that with the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment, the effects of slavery in the United States would quickly diminish. The original plan to readmit states after acceptance of the 13th was supported by President Andrew Johnson, but the Radical Republicans, as they became known, wanted more than just a return to normalcy. They wanted to keep the power they had attained during the war years. The South did not make it easy for Johnson, however, and the so-called Black Codes started to be passed in Southern states. Congressional inquiries into the Black Codes found them to be a new way of controlling ex-slaves, fraught with violence and cruelty.

The ensuing Reconstruction Acts placed the former CSA states under military rule, and prohibited their congressmen's readmittance to Congress until after several steps had been taken, including the approval of the 14th Amendment. The 14th was designed to ensure that all former slaves were granted automatic United States citizenship, and that they would have all the rights and privileges as any other citizen. The amendment passed Congress on June 13, 1866, and was ratified on July 9, 1868 (757 days).

**15th Amendment**  
The last of the Reconstruction Amendments, the 15th Amendment was designed to close the last loophole in the establishment of civil rights for newly-freed black slaves. It ensured that a person's race, color, or prior history as a slave could not be used to bar that person from voting. Though a noble idea, it had little practical effect for quite some time, as the Southern states found myriad ways to intimidate blacks to keep them from voting. The Congress passed the amendment on February 26, 1869, and it was ratified on February 3, 1870 (342 days).

Though ratification of the 15th Amendment was not a requirement for readmittance of the Confederate states to the Congress, one of the provisions of the Reconstruction Acts required that the states include a provision in their new constitutions that included a near-copy of the text of the 15th. All of the CSA states except Tennessee, which was immune from the Reconstruction Acts, eventually ratified the 15th Amendment.

**16th Amendment**  
In 1895, in the Supreme Court case of *Pollock v Farmer's Loan and Trust* (157 U.S. 429), the Court disallowed a federal tax on income from real property. The tax was designed to be an indirect tax, which would mean that states need not contribute portions of a whole relative to its census figures. The Court, however, ruled that the tax was a direct tax and subject to apportionment. This was the last in a series of conflicting court decisions dating back to the Civil War. Between 1895 and 1909, when the amendment was passed by Congress, the Court began to back down on its position, as it became clear not only to accountants but to everyone that the solvency of the nation was in jeopardy. In a series of cases, the definition of "direct tax" was modified, bent, twisted, and coaxed to allow more taxation efforts that approached an income tax.

Finally, with the ratification of the16th Amendment, any doubt was removed. The text of the Amendment makes it clear that though the categories of direct and indirect taxation still exist, any determination that income tax is a direct tax will be irrelevant, because taxes on incomes, from salary or from real estate, are explicitly to be treated as indirect. The Congress passed the Amendment on July 12, 1909, and it was ratified on February 3, 1913 (1,302 days).

**17th Amendment**  
One of the most common critiques of the Framers is that the government that they created was, in many ways, undemocratic. There is little doubt of this, and it is so by design. The Electoral College, by which we choose our President, is one example. The appointment of judges is another. And the selection of Senators not by the people but by the state legislatures, is yet another. The Senatorial selection system eventually became fraught with problems, with consecutive state legislatures sending different Senators to Congress, forcing the Senate to work out who was the qualified candidate, or with the selection system being corrupted by bribery and corruption. In several states, the selection of Senators was left up to the people in referenda, where the legislature approved the people's choice and sent him or her to the Senate. Articles written by early 20th-century muckrakers also provided grist for the popular-election mill.

The 17th Amendment did away with all the ambiguity with a simple premise — the Senators would be chosen by the people, just as Representatives are. Of course, since the candidates now had to cater to hundreds of thousands, or millions, of people instead of just a few hundred, other issues, such as campaign finances, were introduced. The 17th is not a panacea, but it brings government closer to the people. The Amendment was passed by Congress on May 13, 1912, and was ratified on April 8, 1913 (330 days).

**18th Amendment**  
Consumption of alcohol was discouraged by law in many of the states over the first century of the United States under the Constitution. By 1855, 13 of the 31 states had temperance, or alcohol prohibition, laws. The Civil War distracted the public from the temperance movement, but the proliferation of saloons after the Civil War, and the trappings of the saloons (like gambling, prostitution, and public drunkenness) led to the so-called "Women's War" in 1873. Over time, the movement became more organized and the Anti-Saloon League was established in 1893. The ASL's goal was national prohibition, and it set up an office in Washington to that end — it even established its own publishing house in Westerville, Ohio.

The ASL polled candidates on their stand on the temperance question, endorsing candidates with a pro-temperance stance. In the election of 1915, ASL-sponsored candidates swept the elections for Congress, and on December 18, 1917, Congress passed the18th Amendment. It quickly was adopted by the states, being ratified in just over a year, on January 16, 1919 (394 days).

**19th Amendment**  
Though the Constitution originally made no mention of a woman's right to vote, it was implied by society — women simply did not have the right. The 14th Amendment actually made things worse, by codifying the suffrage right to men only, when its Second Clause punished the denial of suffrage to men (though this still did not officially deny women the right). As early as 1848, groups met to discuss how to further women's rights, and the franchise, it was decided, was the best place to start. But America was not ready, and the suffragists, as they were called, were branded as immoral.

Famous women's rights leaders Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton tried to make a stand after the Civil War, to have the language of the 14th Amendment include women, though the issue was thought too volatile by most, and passage of the amendment was thought to be in grave jeopardy if such a provision were included. Anthony later used the 15th Amendment as rationale for voting in a New York election, and though she was tried and fined for voting, the ordeal proved an impetus for the eventual guarantee of voting rights for women. By 1918, about half the states had granted women full or partial voting rights; the stature gained by women involved in the temperance movement also helped push the suffragist movement along. The support of women to the war effort convinced many more, even President Woodrow Wilson, who had been staunchly opposed to a federal suffrage amendment. On June 4, 1919, the 19th Amendment was passed by Congress, and it was ratified on August 18, 1920 (441 days).

**20th Amendment**  
The term "Lame Duck" originates in the mid 1700's. It is applied to an elected official who has not been reelected, but still holds office. For example, in the United States today, the President is elected in November, and inaugurated in January of the following year — the time in between if the President was not reelected, is the lame duck period. Early in the political history of the nation, the period between the election and swearing-in of elected officials was a small issue. With slow methods of transportation and the nature of the politician in the 18th century, the lame duck period was almost a necessity. In fact, once the November election was established, it was more than a year before newly elected congressmen met in December.

But from the start, the lame duck period was a problem, most famously illustrated in the *Marbury v Madison* case, where lame-duck appointments by out-going President John Adams set the stage for a landmark Supreme Court decision with his series of late-night, last-minute appointments. The 20th Amendment cleared up this problem to a degree, by shortening the lame duck period. The Congress is sworn in on January 3 following the election, and the President is sworn in on January 20, rather than the March 4th prescribed in the 12th Amendment. The Amendment also closes a gap in Presidential power by specifying what will happen if a President-elect dies before he is sworn in. The 20th Amendment was passed by Congress on March 2, 1932, and was ratified by the states on January 23, 1933 (327 days).

The 20th reached some notoriety during the impeachment proceedings of President Bill Clinton in 1998; the final House vote was taken after the 1998 elections, and the Senate was not scheduled to hear the case until after the swearing-in of the next Congress in 1999. Arguments that the 20th conceptually required a revote by the new House were fruitless, however.

**21st Amendment**  
It would be a disservice to say that the 18th Amendment was completely ineffective. It would also be a disservice to say that the 18th Amendment caused the lawlessness embodied by people like Al Capone. The 18th Amendment did reduce alcohol consumption in the United States, and it did not cause organized crime. In the Prohibition era, alcohol consumption (measured in gallons of ethanol consumed) dropped to an average of less than a gallon per person per year, down from two and a half gallons in 1915. And organized crime existed before Prohibition, and existed after it, too.

That having been said, the Prohibition era did have a certain sense of lawlessness; the very fact that consumption was not eliminated is testimony to that; and the fact that organized crime manufactured and distributed the bulk of the illicit alcohol of the 1920's and early 1930's is evidence that gangsters were aided by Prohibition. Enforcement was spotty, with stills and speakeasies popping up in every population center. Over-zealous police and federal agents violated civil rights when searching for and destroying the paraphernalia of alcohol. While most Americans respected the law, were in favor of the law, the shine of "dry" began to wear off, especially as the Great Depression set in.

A movement began to form to repeal the 18th Amendment. Prohibition of alcohol was seen as an affront to personal liberty, pushed on the nation by religious moralists. Alcohol was also seen as a source of revenue for the local and national governments. The effort to elect "wet" legislators was as grand as that to elect "dry" ones almost two decades earlier. The Congress passed the amendment on February 20, 1933 (288 days). It mandated, for the first time, that conventions of the states were to vote on the amendment, rather than the legislatures, feeling that conventions would be more apt to vote to ratify - and they did, quickly — the ratification process was complete on December 5, 1933. The 21st Amendment repealed the 18th, the first time an amendment had been repealed by another.

**22nd Amendment**  
Since the presidency of George Washington, only one thing could be said to be totally consistent — that no President had the job for more than two full terms. Washington had been asked to run for a third term in 1796, but he made it quite clear that he had no intention of doing so; that an orderly transition of power was needed to set the Constitution in stone. And so it was for almost 150 years.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was first elected President in 1932, and re-elected in 1936. When it came time for the Democrats to nominate a candidate for the Presidency in 1940, two things had happened. First, the Republicans had made great gains in Congress in the 1938 elections. And Hitler happened. Europe was in the throes of a great war, with trouble in the Pacific, too. A change away from Roosevelt, who had led the nation through the Great Depression, did not seem wise. He was nominated for an unprecedented third term, and won. It was not a landslide victory, however, and it is debatable that FDR would have had a third term had it not been for the war. When 1944 rolled around, changing leaders in the middle of World War II, which the United States was now fully engaged in, also seemed unwise, and FDR ran for and was elected to, a fourth term.

His life was nearly over, however, and his Vice President, Harry Truman, became President upon FDR's death less than 100 days after his inauguration. Though FDR's leadership was seen by many as a key reason that the U.S. came out of WWII victorious, the Congress was determined, once the war ended, to ensure that Washington's self-imposed two-term limit become the law of the land. Specifically excepting Truman from its provisions, the 22nd Amendment passed Congress on March 21, 1947. After Truman won a second term in 1948, it was ratified on February 27, 1951 (1,439 days). Truman could have run for a third term, but bowed out early before campaigning began.

**23rd Amendment**  
The District of Columbia has been a unique city since its founding in 1800 as the seat of the new government. When first established, it was a town of 5000, and it was assumed that it would be the center of government, and not a population center. But by 1900, over a quarter of a million people lived within its bounds. Since it is a federal district, however, and not a state, the inhabitants not only had no real local government, they had no vote in the federal government either. By 1960, when 760,000 people lived in Washington, D.C., it seemed odd that people from a dozen states, with lower populations, had more voting rights than residents of the District. As citizens, they were required to pay taxes and to serve in the military, but a vote in the Presidential election was available only to the states.

It is important to note that the 23rd Amendment does not make Washington, D.C., a state; it just confers upon its citizens the number of electors that it would have if it were a state. It also did not provide full representation in Congress for the District. The Congress passed the amendment on June 17, 1960; the amendment was ratified on March 29, 1961 (285 days).

**24th Amendment**  
One of the last legal vestiges of segregation was the effort to keep the black population from participating in the vote. With most methods for keeping the black vote to a minimum declared unconstitutional, several Southern states found an answer — the poll tax. The poll tax has a long history, and was often used in Europe to raise funds. With a poll tax, in order to vote, a certain tax must be paid. The tax is the same for all, which allowed the generally more affluent white population access to the polls with a minimum of pain, while the generally poorer black population would have trouble justifying trading food on the table for a vote in the ballot box. Worse, different kinds of poll taxes were implemented, some accumulating even if no attempt was made to vote, meaning increasingly higher back-taxes to be paid to gain the vote.

In 1939, Congress began to try to get rid of the poll tax, but history was not behind them. After all, in colonial times and when the Constitution first came into effect, land ownership was often a requirement for suffrage. Though only five states still had a poll tax by the time the amendment passed Congress, Supreme Court rulings made it doubtful that mere legislation would eliminate the tax altogether. Proposed by Congress on August 27, 1962, the 24th Amendment was ratified within a year and a half, on January 23, 1964 (514 days).

**25th Amendment**  
When Dwight Eisenhower was president; he suffered from several medical issues that created a power vacuum. Eisenhower and his Vice President Richard Nixon entered into an agreement that allowed Nixon to become Acting President while Eisenhower was incapacitated. The agreement was between the two men and did not have constitutional authority, but it set a precedent that was followed by the following presidents, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

Nothing prepared anyone, however, for the national tragedy of the Kennedy assassination. The 1963 assassination shocked the nation in more ways than the obvious. The advancement of medical technology had many hoping that the President could have been saved after being shot. That was not the case, but if he had been, Kennedy could have been in a coma for an extended period of time, perhaps never able to fully function again. The Eisenhower-Nixon agreement set some things in motion, but was extra-constitutional. The Vice President would be the President, but would not be able to fulfill his duties. The resulting power vacuum would cause a constitutional crisis — who has the power of the Presidency?

Less than two years after Kennedy's death, on July 6, 1965, the Congress passed the25th Amendment, where the line of succession was not only clarified, but what was to be done in the case of presidential disability was addressed. The selection of a Vice President for an empty Vice Presidential seat was also provided for. The states ratified the amendment on February 10, 1967 (584 days). The second clause, dealing with the filling of a vacancy in the Vice Presidency, was used less than six years later when Gerald Ford assumed the Vice Presidency upon the resignation of Spiro Agnew.

**26th Amendment**  
The United States was in the throes of the Vietnam War and protests were underway throughout the nation. Draftees into the armed services were any male over the age of 18. There was a seeming dichotomy, however: these young men were allowed, even forced, to fight and die for their country, but they were unable to vote. The 14th Amendment only guaranteed the vote, in a roundabout way, to those over twenty-one.

The Congress attempted to right this wrong in 1970 by passing an extension to the 1965 Voting Rights Act (which itself is enforcement legislation based on prior suffrage amendments) that gave the vote to all persons 18 or older, in all elections, on all levels. Oregon objected to the 18-year-old limit, as well as other provisions of the 1970 Act (it also objected to a prohibition on literacy tests for the franchise). In *Oregon v Mitchell* (400 U.S. 112), a sharply divided Supreme Court ruled that the Congress had the power to lower the voting age to 18 for national elections, but not for state and local elections. The case was decided on December 1, 1970. Within months, on March 23, 1971, the Congress passed the text of the 26th Amendment, specifically setting a national voting age, in both state and national elections, to 18. In just 100 days, on July 1, 1971, the amendment was ratified.

**27th Amendment**  
The 27th Amendment was originally proposed on September 25, 1789, as an article in the original Bill of Rights. The proposal was to create an amendment to the conIt did not pass the required number of states with the articles we now know as the first ten amendments. It sat, unratified and with no expiration date, in constitutional limbo, for more than 80 years when Ohio ratified it to protest a congressional pay hike; no other states followed Ohio's lead, however. Again it languished, for more than 100 years.

In 1978, Wyoming ratified the amendment, but there was again, no follow-up by the remaining states. Then, in the early 1980's, Gregory Watson, an aide to a Texas legislator, took up the proposed amendment's cause. From 1983 to 1992, the requisite number of states ratified the amendment, and it was declared ratified on May 7, 1992 (74,003 days).