

Constitutional Timeline

1775: American Revolutionary War Begins

January 10, 1776: Thomas Paine publishes Common Sense

July 2, 1776: Delegates to second Continental Congress vote for independence

July 4, 1776: Congress issues Declaration of Independence

November 15, 1777: Congress proposes Articles of Confederation

March 1, 1780: Pennsylvania adopts gradual emancipation law

March 2, 1780: each state begins to write its own constitution

March 1, 1781: Articles of Confederation Ratified

October 19, 1781: British surrender @ Yorktown

July 8, 1783: Massachusetts Supreme Court declares slavery unconstitutional in Commonwealth v. Jennison

September 3, 1783: Treaty of Paris officially ends Revolutionary War

January 8, 1784: Connecticut legislature approves gradual emancipation plan.

February 23, 1784: Rhode Island passes gradual emancipation law.

January 16, 1786: Freedom of Religion becomes law in Virginia

August 29, 1786: Shay's Rebellion breaks out in Massachusetts

September 14, 1786: delegates in Annapolis say the Articles need to be fixed

February 21, 1787: Congress endorses the call for a Philadelphia convention to fix the Articles of Confederation

May 29, 1787: Edmund Randolph proposes Virginia plan

June 15, 1787: William Peterson proposes New Jersey plan

June 19, 1787: Roger Sherman's Great Compromise creates dispute between large and small states on the issue of representation in Congress

July 13, 1787: Northwest Ordinance allows settlement in the western territory beyond the 13 original colonies

July 16, 1787: Dispute over representation between large and small states settled

August 24, 1787: The nation starts to address the dilemma of slavery

September 12, 1787: Delegates debate inclusion of Bill of Rights

September 17, 1787: Delegates sign final draft of Constitution

November 20, 1787: Federalist Papers promote ratification of the Constitution and are published in New York papers

December 7, 1787: Delaware becomes the first state to ratify the Constitution.

December 12, 1787: Pennsylvania ratifies the Constitution

June 21, 1788: Constitution takes effect when New Hampshire is the 9th state to ratify.

February 4, 1789: Meeting in New York City, electoral college unanimously elects George Washington president

September 24, 1789: Judiciary Act organizes federal court system

September 25, 1789: Bill of Rights added to the Constitution

February 2, 1790: Supreme Court holds first session

July 10, 1790: Congressional act locates future seat of government in District of Columbia

March 3, 1791: Congress begins to put Constitution's principles into practice

December 12, 1791: Congress charters first bank of the U.S.

December 15, 1791: states ratify the first ten constitutional amendments, known as the Bill of Rights

February 17, 1795: 11th Amendment, limiting federal power of the courts, ratified

March 4, 1797: John Adams inaugurated as president

July 6, 1798: Congress passes Alien Act, allowing dangerous aliens expelled by president's discretion

July 14, 1798: Congress passes Sedition Act, limiting freedom of press and speech

February 17, 1801: Thomas Jefferson becomes president

February 24, 1803: Marbury v. Madison confirms Supreme Court's power

May 2, 1803: Louisiana Purchase made for \$15 million

June 15, 1804: 12th Amendment ratified, requiring separate election of the president and vice president

January 1, 1808: Congress abolishes African slave trade.

March 4, 1809: James Madison inaugurated as president

June 18, 1812: U.S. declares war on Britain

August 24, 1814: British capture Washington, D.C. setting fire to White House, Capitol, and most Department buildings.

March 4, 1815: Treaty of Ghent formally ends the War of 1812

April 10, 1816: Congress charters 2nd Bank of the U.S.

March 2, 1819: Congress passes first immigration law in U.S. history

March 3, 1820: Missouri Compromise, declares 12 slaves states and the other 12 free

December 2, 1823: Monroe Doctrine warns European nations not to interfere in American continents

February 12, 1825: Creek Indians sign treaty with U.S., agreeing to turn over land and move west.

May 28, 1830: Congress passes Indian Removal Act, setting aside land in Oklahoma for eastern tribes.

December 21, 1830: Georgia extends into lands secured to Cherokee by federal treaty

November 24, 1832: South Carolina nullifies Tariff Acts of 1828 and 1832

January 16, 1833: Congress passes Force Act of 1833, enforcing federal laws against nullification

May 13, 1846: U.S. declares war with Mexico

August 8, 1846: Huge Congressional debate whether acquired land from Mexican war has slavery or not

July 20, 1848: Seneca Falls Convention calls for equal civil and political rights for women.

September 20, 1850: Compromise of 1850 temporarily settles issue of slavery in territories

May 30, 1854: Kansas-Nebraska Act applies popular sovereignty in Louisiana Purchase Territory north of the Missouri Compromise line.

May 21, 1856: Bleeding Kansas---dispute over slavery in new territories leave issues for Congress to resolve.

March 6, 1857: Dred Scott decision states that now Black American man, slave or free, was a U.S. citizen, and cannot sue the courts, or have any constitutional right.

December 20, 1860: South Carolina is the first state to leave the Union.

April 12, 1861: Attack on Fort Sumter starts the Civil War

April 22, 1862: President Lincoln suspends writ of habeas corpus along Washington and Philadelphia route—followed by other limitations of the Constitution. Lincoln first acts and later asks approval from Congress

January 1, 1863: Lincoln delivers Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in the Southern states

November 19, 1863: Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address, stating we are a unified nation, even before the Constitution, and not just a collection of states

April 9, 1865: The Civil War ends and the South surrenders

December 6, 1865: The states ratify the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery in the U.S.

December 24, 1865: Ku Klux Klan formed in Pulaski, Tennessee by Confederate veterans.

April 9, 1866: Congress passes Civil Rights Act of 1866,

June 13, 1866: States ratify 14th Amendment, granting former slaves citizenship and promising “equal protection of the laws”

December 10, 1869: Wyoming Territory extends voting rights to women.

February 3, 1870: 15th Amendment ratified, guarantees the right to vote regardless of race.

March 3, 1871: Indian Appropriation Act declares all Native American treaties void and makes all Indians wards of the federal government

April 20, 1871: Congress passes Ku Klux Klan Act, allowing the president to impose martial law when southern governments violate civil rights

November 18, 1872: Susan B. Anthony arrested in NY, for attempting to vote in the presidential election

April 14, 1873: In the Slaughterhouse Cases, Supreme Court rejects the view that 14th Amendment applies to the Bill of Rights of the states.

February 23, 1875: Jim Crow laws start in Tennessee

January 22, 1882: John D. Rockefeller establishes Standard Oil

May 6, 1882: Congress passes Chinese Exclusion Act, banning Chinese immigration for 10 years.

January 16, 1883: Congress passes Pendleton Reform Act, establishing permanent Civil Service Commission

May 10, 1885: Supreme Court in Yick Wo v. Hopkins, rules that aliens are protected under the 14th Amendment

May 10, 1886: Supreme Court rules in decision that a corporation is considered a person under the 14th Amendment

July 2, 1890: the National American Women’s Suffrage Association forms to promote the right of women to vote

February 23, 1903: Congress upholds congressional power to bar lottery tickets from interstate commerce in Champion v. Ames

June 29, 1906: Hepburn Act extends powers of Interstate Commerce Commission

June 30, 1906: Congress passes the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act

February 12, 1909: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People founded

February 24, 1909: Muller v. Oregon allows states to limit women's working hours to protect women's health and physical structure. This hinders the women's rights movement since a similar law for limiting men's hours was overturned because it violated the right to work

February 3, 1913: States ratify the 16th Amendment, allowing for a federal income tax

April 8, 1913: States ratify the 17th Amendment, allowing for the direct election of senators

December 23, 1913: Congress creates Federal Reserve Board to regulate banking

1914: Margaret Sanger indicted for advertising birth-control information and devices

November 9, 1916: Jeannette Rankin becomes the first woman elected to Congress

April 6, 1917: U.S. enters World War I

June 15, 1918: Congress passes Espionage Act

October 1, 1917: Roger Baldwin founds the National Civil Liberties Bureau, precursor to American Civil Liberties Union

May 16, 1918: Congress passes Sedition Act to suppress wartime dissent

June 3, 1918: Supreme Court in Hammer v. Dagenhart, declares federal Child Labor Act unconstitutional invasion of states' rights

January 16, 1919: States ratify the 18th Amendment, prohibiting the sale, manufacture, and transportation of liquor.

March 3, 1919: Supreme Court in Schenck v. U.S. sustains convictions of war protesters adopting "clear and present danger" test

August 18, 1920: States ratify 19th Amendment, granting women suffrage throughout America

April 9, 1923: Supreme Court rules minimum wage laws for women unconstitutional in Adkins v. Children's Hospital.

December 10, 1923: The Equal Rights Amendment, written by Alice Paul, is introduced to Congress

June 8, 1925: Supreme Court applies First Amendment to states in Gillow v. New York

March 4, 1931: Franklin D. Roosevelt inaugurated as president

January 23, 1933: Ratification of the 20th Amendment changes inauguration date of presidents from March to January

May 17, 1933: Congress passes National Industrial Recovery Act, creating the National Recovery Administration (NRA)

June 16, 1933: Hundred Days Congress passes its last New Deal measure

December 5, 1933: States ratify 21st Amendment, repealing the 18th Amendment, ends prohibition

June 6, 1934: Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) created

July 5, 1935: National Labor Relations Act is enacted, protecting workers rights to organize unions and bargain collectively

August 14, 1935: Congress passes Social Security Act, establishing pensions for persons aged 65 and older

January 6, 1936: Supreme Court in U.S. v. Butler, rules the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional

March 29, 1937: Supreme Court sustains constitutionality of minimum wage legislation in West Coast Hotel V. Parrish

April 12, 1937: Supreme Court in *NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Co.*, upholds constitutionality of National Labor Relations Act

June 25, 1938: Fair Labor Standards Act establishes minimum wage and forty-hour workweek for many workers

April 25, 1940: Supreme Court, in the first flag-salute case, upholds constitutionality of mandatory flag salutes in public schools

July 15, 1940: FDR seeks an unprecedented third presidential term

December 8, 1940: Following attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. enters World War II

June 22, 1944: Congress passes G.I. Bill, establishing programs to secure housing and education for veterans

August 14, 1945: World War II ends

October 18, 1945: Nuremberg War Crime Trials begin; military and political leaders of Nazi Germany prosecuted for crimes against humanity

July 25, 1947: Congress passes National Security Act

May 3, 1948: Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, rules unenforceable restrictive covenants denying blacks access to housing in white neighborhoods

July 26, 1948: Truman ends segregation in the military

April 4, 1949: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) founded

February 9, 1950: Investigations are made of Communists and Communist sympathizers in the government

June 27, 1950: Without securing formal congressional approval, President Truman sends U.S. troops to Korea as part of United Nations police action

February 27, 1951: Ratification of the 22nd Amendment limits presidents to two terms.

June 4, 1951: Supreme Court, in *Dennis v. U.S.*, sustains leading communists' convictions under Smith Act of 1940

April 8, 1952: President Truman seizes control of steel industry to avert strike during Korean War

February 27, 1953: Korean War ends

December 5, 1955: Rosa Parks spurred Civil Rights movement by refusing to give up her seat to a white bus rider

September 24, 1957: President Eisenhower enforces federal-court desegregation order, sending federal troops to Little Rock, AR, to escort 9 black children to school

March 29, 1961: Ratification of 23rd Amendment extends voting rights in presidential elections to District of Columbia residents

March 26, 1962: Supreme Court declares that federal courts can decide reapportionment cases in *Baker v. Carr*

June 26, 1962: The Supreme Court bans New York State school prayer in violation of First Amendment

March 18, 1963: Supreme Court rules persons accused of felonies must be provided lawyers in *Gideon v. Wainwright*

August 28, 1963: demonstration in Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers "I have a Dream" speech.

January 23, 1964: States ratify 24th Amendment, prohibiting poll taxes in federal elections

August 7, 1964: Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, allowing the President to take all necessary steps to protect U.S. forces in Southeast Asia.

December 14, 1964: Supreme Court sustains constitutionality of 1964 Civil Rights Act in Heart of Atlanta Motel v. U.S.

March 7, 1965: Selma-Montgomery March increases pressure for national legislation to secure voting rights

June 7, 1965: Supreme Court declares for first time a constitutional right to marital privacy in Griswold v. Connecticut

August 9, 1965: Congress passes Voting Rights Act

March 24, 1966: In Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections, the Supreme Court stopped states and local districts from imposing a poll tax on any election

February 10, 1967: States ratify 25th Amendment, modifying presidential succession

June 12, 1967: Supreme Court in Loving v. Virginia, strikes down prohibitions against interracial marriage as a 14th Amendment violation

April 20, 1971: Supreme Court in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education upholds use of busing to end state-imposed school segregation

June 30, 1971: “Pentagon Papers” case New York Times v. U.S. confirms freedom of the press.

July 1, 1971: The 26th Amendment is ratified, standardizing the voting age to 18.

November 22, 1971: Supreme Court rules in Reed v. Reed, for the first time that laws discriminating against women violate 14th Amendment

March 22, 1972: Congress sends Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) barring discrimination based on sex to states for ratification

January 22, 1973: The Supreme Court overturns state prohibition of abortions in Roe v. Wade

March 29, 1973: U.S. withdraws combat troops from Vietnam

November 7, 1973: Congress reasserts its role with the War Powers Act

June 30, 1982: Equal Rights Amendment fails, having fallen three states short of 38 needed for ratification

June 30, 1986: Supreme Court rules that laws criminalizing homosexual conduct are constitutional in Bowers v. Hardwick.

November 13, 1987: Iran-Contra affair tests the system of checks and balances

May 7, 1992: States ratify 27th Amendment, limiting congressional pay raises

June 29, 1992: Supreme Court refuses to overrule its controversial Roe v. Wade abortion decision in Planned Parenthood v. Casey

May 22, 1995: Supreme Court strikes down state laws limiting congressional terms

February 12, 1997: Proposed constitutional amendment to limit congressional terms fails in House of Representatives

March 4, 1997: Proposed constitutional amendment requiring balanced budget fails in Senate

June 20, 2002: Supreme Court in Atkins v. Virginia, rules unconstitutional executions of mentally retarded criminals

June 23, 2003: Supreme Court upholds affirmative action in college admission

June 26, 2003: Supreme Court strikes down Texas law criminalizing homosexual conduct

June 27, 2006: United States Senate votes down by one vote a flag desecration amendment

July 18, 2006: U.S. House of Representatives votes down the Federal Marriage Amendment that would limit marriage in the U.S. to unions of one man and one woman

October 1, 2008: The U.S. Senate passed the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, also known as a bailout of the U.S. financial system, creating a \$700 billion Troubled Assets Relief Program to purchase failing bank assets.

Oct. 3, 2008: The U.S. House of Representatives enacted the EESA of 2008

November 2008: Voters in California pass Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage in the state through an amendment to the state constitution