



The Amendment Process

Step 1. Reading

Read Section 9.7 and answer the questions below:

1. Why did the framers make it possible to change the Constitution?
2. What are two pieces of evidence that prove that amending the Constitution is "difficult"?

Step 2. Constitution Question Cards

Get a set of Amendment Process cards. To answer each question, refer to either Section 9.7 or the Constitution, which starts on page 474 in *History Alive! The United States Through Industrialism*. Record the answers below in complete sentences. For bonus points, record the article and section where the answer can be found.

Answer

Article/Section

23. _____

24. _____

25. _____

26. _____

9.7 The Amendment Process Changes the Constitution

The framers knew that the Constitution would need to be changed over time. As Thomas Jefferson said, the Constitution “belongs to the living and not to the dead.” At the same time, they wanted the Constitution to provide a lasting and stable framework for the government. To maintain that stability, the framers made changing the Constitution possible, but difficult.

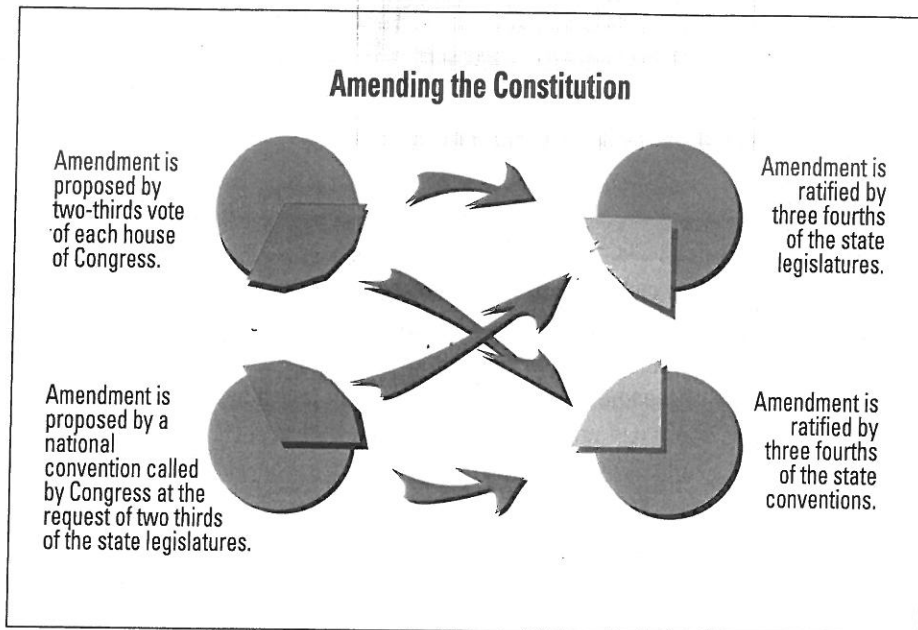
amendment a change to the Constitution

Changing the Constitution

Article V describes how changes, called **amendments**, can be made to the Constitution.

Proposing an amendment requires a vote of two thirds of both houses of Congress, or a national convention called by Congress at the request of two thirds of the legislatures of all the states. Thus, either Congress or the states can start the process of amending the Constitution.

Proposing an amendment is only the first step. Before an amendment can become part of the Constitution, it must be approved by the legislatures (or by special conventions) in three quarters of the states. Once an amendment is approved, it becomes part of the supreme law of the land.



This chart shows the different ways that amendments to the Constitution can be proposed and approved. Amendments are proposed in Congress on a regular basis. The vast majority of the proposals fail.

Amendments So Far Over the years, people have suggested more than 10,000 amendments to the Constitution. Only 27 of these have been approved.

The first ten amendments were added almost immediately after the Constitution was ratified (approved by the states). These amendments were demanded by many Americans in exchange for their support for the Constitution. Called the Bill of Rights, these ten amendments primarily guarantee specific rights to citizens. The Bill of Rights is so important in American history that the next chapter is devoted to it.

The other 17 amendments became part of the Constitution one at a time. Some of them changed the way certain public officials are elected. Others guaranteed the rights of certain groups of Americans. For instance, the Thirteenth Amendment made slavery illegal. The Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed women the right to vote. And the Twenty-sixth Amendment gave the right to vote to all citizens over the age of 18. Ideas for other amendments are proposed from time to time, but chances are that very few of them will become part of the Constitution.