

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The Twelfth Amendment

Introduction:

The Twelfth Amendment changed the way Americans elect the president and vice president. In the 1796 election, Federalist John Adams won the most electoral votes. His political rival, Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson, was the runner-up. In accordance with Article II, the political rivals became president and vice president. In the next election, Thomas Jefferson tied with his running-mate, Aaron Burr. This election was ultimately decided in the House of Representatives. Taken together, these two elections prompted the Twelfth Amendment. Now electors vote specifically for the president and the vice president.

The text of this amendment begins, “The Electors shall meet in their respective states and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President,…”

Questions:

1. What article does the Twelfth Amendment change?
2. What year was the Twelfth Amendment ratified?
3. What is interesting about the results of the 1796 election?
4. Why would it have been difficult for President Adams to govern with Vice President Jefferson?
5. What is interesting about the results of the 1800 election?
6. Since no candidate received a majority of electoral votes, who decided the 1800 election?
7. Originally, according to the Constitution, how were the President and Vice President elected?
8. How does the Twelfth Amendment change Article II?
9. What did Thomas Jefferson call the peaceful transfer of power from John Adams to himself?
10. Why might George Washington have warned against the dangers of political factions, or parties?