

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The Sixteenth Amendment

Introduction:

The Sixteenth Amendment is the first of the Progressive Era Amendments. The “big business” economy of the early 1900s created a wealthy class of Americans. Progressive politicians aimed to even out the playing field between the wealthy and the poor with a progressive income tax. Since the Supreme Court had ruled such a tax as unconstitutional, an amendment was necessary. The Sixteenth Amendment permits a progressive income tax that taxes the wealthy at a higher percentage.

The text of this amendment reads, “The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.”

Questions:

1. What is permitted by the Sixteenth Amendment?
2. What year was the Sixteenth Amendment ratified?
3. What is income tax?
4. What does “apportionment” mean?
5. What was the Income Tax Act of 1894?
6. What was the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Pollock v. Farmers’ Loan and Trust Co.* (1895)?
7. How did the Sixteenth Amendment change Article I?
8. Why did Progressive politicians favor an income tax?
9. Today, how much of the government’s total revenue comes from personal income taxes?
10. What do you think are some advantages and disadvantages of the income tax?