

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The Twentieth Amendment

Introduction:

The Twentieth Amendment is one of several amendments that changed Article II. Among other things, this amendment shortened the time period between election and inauguration, a time commonly referred to as the “lame duck” period. It also set January 20th as Inauguration Day for the president and vice president, and January 3rd as the date for congressmen to take office.

The text of this amendment begins, “The terms of the President and the Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January, and the terms of Senators and Representatives at noon on the 3d day of January, of the years in which such terms would have ended if this article had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.”

Questions:

1. What is the Twentieth Amendment?
2. What year was the Twentieth Amendment ratified?
3. What is a “lame duck” politician?
4. Why would a politician in this stage be called a “lame duck”?
5. Before the Twentieth Amendment, when did a newly-elected president take office?
6. Why is there an extended amount of time between election and inauguration?
7. Since the ratification of the Twentieth Amendment, when does the president take office?
8. According to the Twentieth Amendment, when do members of Congress take office?
9. Who was the first president to take the oath of office on January 20th?
10. Do you think a shorter “lame duck” period is a good thing? Why, or why not?