

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF THE PRESIDENTS™

The Twenty-Seventh Amendment

Introduction:

The Twenty-Seventh Amendment limits when Congress can assign themselves pay raises. The amendment itself doesn't sound too exciting, but the story behind it is rather entertaining. This amendment was one of twelve proposed by James Madison. Ten of those twelve would gain the approval of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states and become the Bill of Rights. This one did not. That is where the story might have ended. But in 1982, Gregory Watson, a sophomore at the University of Texas, wrote a paper on the congressional pay amendment. He claimed that it could still be ratified as there was no time limit. When he earned a "C" on the paper, it became his mission to get the amendment ratified. By contacting state congress members, he got the ratification process rolling. In 1992, nearly 203 years after Madison proposed it, the 38th state approved and the amendment was ratified.

The text of this amendment reads, "No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of representatives shall have intervened."

Questions:

1. What is the Twenty-Seventh Amendment?
2. What year was the Twenty-Seventh Amendment ratified?
3. According to this amendment, when does a congressional pay raise go into effect?
4. How many years after being sent to the states was the amendment ratified?
5. What state was the 38th to sign the amendment, making ratification a reality?
6. What is the job of the archivist of the United States?
7. What role did Gregory Watson play in the ratification of the Twenty-Seventh Amendment?
8. Why was the support of only nine states needed to ratify the Bill of Rights in 1791?
9. What is the normal time limit for many proposed amendments?
10. Do you think amendments should have time limits for ratification? Why, or why not?