

SHOULD THE 22ND AMENDMENT BE REPEALED?

The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits any U.S. president from being elected to more than two terms and prohibits any vice president who rises to the office of president and holds the office for more than two years from being elected to more than one full term.

Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson decided not to run for a third term as president. Historians say this indicates that the founding fathers implied that U.S. presidents should limit themselves to two terms. As a result, almost all presidents prior to the passing of the 22nd Amendment self-imposed a two-term limit on themselves. Only Ulysses S. Grant, Grover Cleveland, and Woodrow Wilson were elected twice and tried to run for a third term (all lost in the party nomination stage). Theodore Roosevelt succeeded to the presidency upon William McKinley's assassination and was himself elected in 1904 to a full term, serving from 1901 to 1909. He sought to be elected to a non-consecutive third term in the election of 1912, but lost to Woodrow Wilson. McKinley's death came only six months into his second term, and while election in 1912 would not have constituted a third elected term, Roosevelt could have otherwise served eleven and a half years.

Franklin D. Roosevelt is the only president to serve more than two terms (he was elected to four terms, but died during his fourth term). It's believed that Roosevelt's long run was because the American people didn't want to change leadership during World War II. But almost immediately following Roosevelt's death, the 22nd Amendment was introduced and ratified.

Passed by Congress in 1947, and ratified by the states on February 27, 1951, the 22nd Amendment limits an elected president to two terms in office, a total of eight years. However, it is possible for an individual to serve up to ten years as president. The amendment specifies that if a vice president or other successor takes over for a president—who, for whatever reason, cannot fulfill the term—and serves two years or less of the former president's term, the new president may serve for two full four-year terms. If more than two years remain of the term when the successor assumes office, the new president may serve only one additional term.

Since then, many Congresspersons have introduced symbolic bills to eliminate the 22nd Amendment, but these are never taken seriously. Many bills have been introduced in the last 20 years alone, under every president since Ronald Reagan. But not one of these bills has been brought to a vote. They're considered a nod to the current president by his congressional supporters, and nothing more.

Nearly everyone who participates in the political process believes that the 22nd Amendment is important. It gives the American people more opportunity for choice in their leadership; it prevents one person from becoming some sort of monarch or dictator.

AMENDMENT XXII (1951)

Section 1.

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of President more than once. But this Article shall not apply to any person holding the office of President when this Article was proposed by Congress, and shall not prevent any person who may be holding the office of President, or acting as President, during the term within which this Article becomes operative from holding the office of President or acting as President during the remainder of such term.

Section 2.

This Article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years from the date of its submission to the States by the Congress.

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Added in the aftermath of FDR's election to a fourth term, the 22nd Amendment limits presidents to two terms

YES

The 22nd Amendment is antidemocratic. Term limits deny the nation the opportunity to re-elect successful presidents. If Americans are pleased with the performance of their chief executive, why force him out because of a fear of power? Our checks and balances system is strong enough to resist overweening ambition.

The 22nd Amendment robs us of the most experienced people for the office. Why not let the American people decide if they want to take advantage of that service instead of risking the job on an untried leader?

The Amendment also reduces the political power of the president to unacceptable levels. The day after a president wins a second term, everyone knows he is an instant lame duck. At the moment of his highest experience and level of authority, the president's ability to shape the policy agenda is diminished because everyone knows when he is leaving office. Attention quickly shifts to speculation about a successor, and soon he can do little more than focus on foreign policy. Pressing domestic tasks end up waiting until after the next election.

One purpose of elections is to reward or punish leaders for their performance. Since second-term presidents will not face the electorate again, they have an incentive to use their discretionary authority without fear of retribution. In other words, they are less accountable to the public.

Term limits target a phantom problem, and the costs outweigh the benefits. The Framers were right to reject them, and so should we.

—David A. Crockett

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NO

Repealing the 22nd Amendment would allow presidents to use their significant power to ward off all challengers well beyond the present two-term limit.

As the nation's supreme elected official, the president has command of the media spotlight. He can stand in front of the military to emphasize his role as commander in chief. With this power, he can raise money and establish contacts to a degree that challengers can only envy.

Without the 22nd Amendment, Republican Ronald Reagan and Democrat Bill Clinton could have won third terms. While their supporters would have welcomed this, the nation would not have been better off, for two reasons.

First, presidents consistently run into scandals in their second term, due to a sense of invulnerability developed after winning re-election. Ethical and legal problems plagued the second terms of Reagan and Clinton, and now that of President Bush. A third-term president would likely be more arrogant and insular, leading to even worse ethical and legal problems.

Second, new times call for fresh ideas and perspectives. A third-term presidency would suffer from stagnation, since the White House tends to seal off its occupant from the issues that concern Americans.

The White House is meant to be an office where the president works, not a palace where he or she can reign like royalty until choosing to step aside. To that end, the 22nd Amendment serves the founders' vision of America as a republic, not a monarchy.

—Kevin Bruyneel

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The 22nd Amendment **should** / **should not** be repealed. Circle/highlight one. Explain in a well-written paragraph.