

# North Carolina CONSTITUTION

**S**ince statehood,  
North Carolina has adopted  
three constitutions...

## 1776

North Carolina's Fifth Provincial Congress met at Halifax from November 12 to December 23, 1776 to approve the Constitution of North Carolina.

The Constitution explicitly affirmed separation of powers and created the familiar three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. It gave the greatest power to the General Assembly, which would make the laws and appoint all state officials, including the governor, who would have a one-year term.

In 1835, the Constitution was amended in two important ways. One was fixing the membership of the House and Senate at 120 and 50, respectively. The second was allowing popular election of the governor to a two-year term.

See [The 1776 Constitution at the Yale Avalon Project](#)



## 1868

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the U.S. Congress ordered all states to bring their constitutions into conformity with federal law.

The Constitution of 1868, ratified by a vote of 93,086 to 74,016, abolished slavery and provided for universal male suffrage. Voters' rights were expanded. The position of governor was again strengthened with increased powers and a four-year term. The courts were overhauled, public schools were created, county and town governments were defined, and taxation was codified. Later amendments (1873, 1875, and 1900) weakened these progressive achievements.

See [The 1868 Constitution at the North Carolina Digital Collections](#)

## 1971

This current version of the North Carolina Constitution was the result of proposals by the Constitution Study Commission (CSC), a group of North Carolina leaders tasked with modernizing the state's founding document. The new Constitution reorganized the executive branch, banned poll taxes, and simplified the state income tax.

Over the years, the Constitution has been amended several times. In 1972, the minimum age for voting was changed from 21 to 18 years. A 1977 amendment allowed governors and lieutenant governors to be re-elected to consecutive terms. And in 1996, the governor was given the power to veto legislation passed by the General Assembly.

- [Text of Constitution](#)
- [Amendments since 1971](#)
- [Amendment process](#)
- [CSC report \(1968\)](#)

## Additional Resources

- [NCPedia](#)
- [UNC Law Library](#)
- [UNC School of Government](#)