

## **The 1971 Constitution** <sup>[1]</sup>

In the hundred years after the ratification of [North Carolina's 1868 constitution](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, the state's voters ratified 69 amendments -- including 42 between 1933 and 1968. Even with so many changes, the constitution had still become outdated in many ways. Some of the amendments had also left outdated provisions in place, so that the document was confusing and contradictory.

In 1967, Governor Dan K. Moore recommended that the North Carolina State Bar -- the state agency that regulates the practice of law -- take the lead in revising the state constitution. A study commission found that too many changes were needed to be passed as amendments. Instead, the commission rewrote the existing constitution, making mainly small changes to clean up and clarify the text. In addition, they proposed ten major amendments. The General Assembly approved the new draft constitution in 1969, along with six of the amendments, and put them to a statewide vote. In the election of November 1970, the people of North Carolina approved the new constitution by a vote of 393,759 to 251,132, along with five of the six amendments. The new constitution took effect in 1971.

The amendments approved by the General Assembly and ratified by the people reorganized the executive branch, banned poll taxes, provided for new kinds of local taxes and borrowing by city and county governments, and simplified the state income tax. The General Assembly also approved an amendment that would have repealed the literacy test for voting, but that amendment was defeated in the statewide election -- even though, after the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, it could no longer be enforced.

## **Further amendments**

Since 1971, the constitution has been amended several times. A few of these amendments stand out. In 1972, the minimum age for voting was changed from 21 to 18 years. In 1977, the constitution was amended to permit 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 -- a power that the governors of every other state already had.

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### **Authors:**

[Walbert, David](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

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