

Contact: Jessica Reighard
Associate Publicist
(212) 872-8172

201 EAST 90 STREET NEW YORK, NY 10022

T I M E S  B O O K S

"A masterful book, daring in its scope and impeccable in its execution. *AMENDING AMERICA* is a great work of scholarship . . . It is a tribute to the working of American democracy."

Vartan Gregorian, President, Brown University

"A magnificent treasure trove of American history . . . *AMENDING AMERICA* is a wonderful book for anyone interested in our country."

Arthur R. Miller, Bruce Bromley Professor of Law, Harvard Law School

AMENDING AMERICA

If We Love the Constitution So Much,
Why Do We Keep Trying to Change It?

RICHARD B. BERNSTEIN

WITH JEROME AGEL

In his Inaugural Address, President Bill Clinton declared, "Each generation of Americans must define what it means to be an American." Throughout the nation's history, the Constitution of the United States has been the main-spring of American public life *and* a focal point of American efforts to redefine our national identity. When we use the amending process codified in the Constitution, we redefine our national goals and principles. When we amend the Constitution, we are amending America.

AMENDING AMERICA: If We Love the Constitution So Much, Why Do We Keep Trying to Change It? (Times Books; March 24, 1993; \$25.00), the first comprehensive history of the Constitution's amending process, examines the relationship between efforts to amend the Constitution and American national identity. It tells the provocative story of how Americans have used the amending process to keep the Constitution ready to meet the challenges confronting our evolving nation.

We have adopted twenty-seven amendments over the course of our history, and debated and rejected some ten thousand more. New York Law School professor Richard B. Bernstein and Jerome Agel provide a spirited and insightful discussion of the political and social forces that have led us to change the Constitution, and the consequences of those changes.

AMENDING AMERICA describes how we have used the amending process to create the Bill of Rights and to ban liquor, to protect the right to vote and to rework how we choose Presidents and Senators. A hundred years ago, we tried in vain to amend the Constitution to stave off the Civil War—and then wrote the results of that war into the document. Amending politics continues to dominate American public life, as various politicians have their hearts set on amendments to balance the budget or to ban abortion. This book's analysis of current controversies of the amending process is "an excellent delineation of issues debated by modern constitutional scholars." (Kirkus Reviews)

AMENDING AMERICA brings to life the political ferment of our history through the stories of the men and women behind the various amendments: James Madison, who championed the Bill of Rights despite his skepticism of "parchment barriers" against tyranny; Virginia Minor, who tried to get the federal courts to interpret the Fourteenth Amendment to protect women's right to vote, and whose defeat in the Supreme Court was overturned nearly half a century later by the Nineteenth Amendment; Nelson W. Aldrich, the Rhode Island Senator who proposed an amendment to prevent the enactment of an income tax bill, only to see both the amendment and the tax become law; Gregory D. Watson, the Texas legislative aide who spent years lobbying to win adoption of an amendment proposed in 1789 limiting Congress's power to set its own salary—and succeeded against all odds when Michigan made it the Twenty-seventh Amendment in 1992.

When the American people attempt to amend the Constitution, they stand in the shoes of the Founding Fathers, prepared to reshape our fundamental law to meet their changing needs. With lively anecdotes and consummate scholarship, Bernstein and Agel illuminate one of America's most important yet least-known democratic tools: amending the Constitution. Readers will never look at the Constitution the same way again.

About the authors:

Richard B. Bernstein, adjunct associate professor of law at New York Law School, has written or edited twelve books on American constitutional history, including *Are We to Be a Nation?: The Making of the Constitution* (with Kym S. Rice). He has served as historical consultant to the Library of Congress and research director of the New York State Commission on the Bicentennial of the Constitution. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Jerome Agel has written and/or produced more than fifty books, including collaborations with Carl Sagan, Marshall McLuhan, Stanley Kubrick, and Isaac Asimov. His recent works include *The U.S. Constitution for Everyone, Why in the World: Adventures in Geography* (with George J. Demko), and the nonfiction novels *22 Fires* and *Deliverance in Sharighal*.

AMENDING AMERICA: If We Love the Constitution So Much, Why Do We Keep Trying to Change It?

Richard B. Bernstein
with Jerome Agel
Publication date: March 24, 1993
Price: \$25.00