

**THE ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL
TENURE OF OFFICE: A STUDY OF THE CONSENSUS
BUILDING OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMERS**

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Abstract

The term of office of the President was one of the principal problems over which the opinions of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 were greatly divided. After much deliberation the constitutional framers finally decided the term at four years and refused to limit the number of terms to which the people might elect a President.

Step by step the consensus of decision on the presidential term was formed among the fifty-five delegates from the several states. According to the degree of difficulty which they had confronted, the consensus of the founding fathers was reached one by one as follows:

1. The principle of the separation of powers.
2. If the President was to be re-eligible, a shorter term was preferable; if he was ineligible for a second time, a longer term was preferable.
3. The President should be re-eligible, especially in the emergencies of the nation.
4. The President should not be chosen by the national legislature. But, if the electoral college failed to choose the President, the House of Representatives should hold the run-off which could serve as a contingent method of the presidential election.
5. The presidential term was fixed at four years.

The four-year term with re-eligibility was an arrangement which contributed to the strengthening of the efficiency and prestige of the executive by encouraging the President in office to do his best to serve the people in order to win the re-election. Then the executive might carry more weight to function as check and balance on the legislature for the

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purpose of protecting the liberty and rights of the people of the United States.