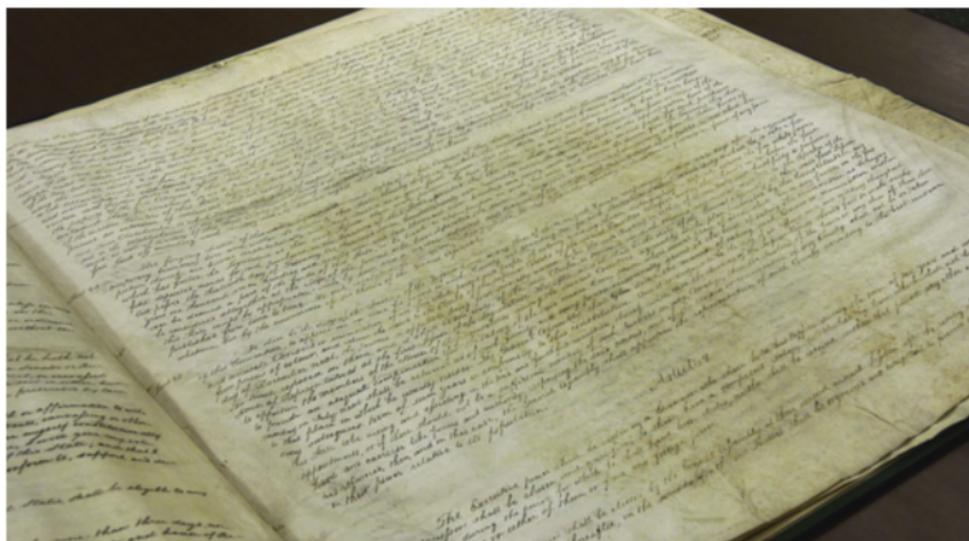


Georgia's American Journey: Georgia's many constitutions tell the story of power and change

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Georgia's political history offers a unique look at how the state and the nation has evolved.

March 6, 2026 by Tyrik Wynn



MILLEDGEVILLE, Georgia (41NBC/WMG) – One of the clearest ways to see that evolution is through Georgia's constitutions.

Since the American Revolution, Georgia has adopted ten different constitutions, reflecting major changes in government, politics, and civil rights over more than two centuries.

Scott Buchanan, a political science professor at Georgia College & State University, says those rewrites often followed major moments in Georgia's political history.

"First constitution was 1776 American Revolution and we have a tendency to rewrite with other major events of Georgia political history 1861 new constitution since Georgia was in the confederacy two more during reconstruction and then another one after reconstruction is over in 1877," Buchanan said.

Georgia's first constitution was adopted in 1777 as the new state government formed after separating from Great Britain.

Holly Croft, associate director for special collections at Georgia College & State University, says the document reflected the political priorities of the time.

"1777 of course we're establishing a brand new country and a brand new state within that country because you know before that we had been under Great Britain's rule so that establishes land owners as having the right to vote that would've been all white man and they were very, very interested in being anti King so we didn't even have a governor to start with. We just had a state legislature," Croft said.

During Reconstruction after the Civil War, Georgia's constitution changed again, expanding voting rights and political representation for African Americans.

"1868 would've been where African-American men would've had the right to vote. That's where we get the 33 that are elected to the state legislature," Croft said.

But the end of Reconstruction brought another shift in power.

"1877 is when reconstruction is beginning to fail and so that is the reestablishment of white Democrats in charge," Croft explained.

Over time, several versions of Georgia's constitution helped reinforce political power in rural areas.

"The constitutions overall and certainly through 1945 tended to reinforce the power of rural Georgia and specifically of white voters in rural Georgia," Buchanan said.

The most recent rewrite came in 1983, modernizing state government and removing discriminatory language tied to civil rights violations.

"1983 constitution did away with some of the language that was designed to violate the civil rights of Black Georgians," Buchanan said.

Historians say Georgia's constitution will likely continue evolving in the future.

"I suspect that I'll see another constitution in my lifetime," Croft said.

Together, Georgia's constitutions reflect how the state has continually redefined citizenship, governance, and freedom, mirroring the broader American story over the last 250 years.