

By: Klick

H.C.R. No. 145

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, Through a persistent decade-long crusade that
2 culminated in changing the U.S. Constitution, Gregory D. Watson of
3 Austin has earned the unique distinction of completing what
4 Founding Father James Madison left unfinished as well as
5 successfully getting the overall course grade for his 1982
6 University of Texas at Austin government class elevated from a C to
7 an A after the intervention of 35 years; and

8 WHEREAS, In the spring of 1982, Mr. Watson, then a UT
9 student, was enrolled in a Government 310 course on American
10 government; while researching a term paper on the proposed Equal
11 Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, he happened upon some
12 old constitutional amendments that had been proposed by Congress
13 but not ratified by enough state legislatures to officially become
14 part of the federal Constitution; and

15 WHEREAS, One such amendment, dated 1789, mandated that any
16 approved congressional pay raise not take effect until after the
17 next biennial election; the measure specifically reads that "No
18 law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and
19 Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of
20 Representatives shall have intervened"; only nine states had
21 ratified that measure by 1978, and ratification by three-fourths of
22 the states is required before an amendment to the Constitution can
23 be certified; at the same time, the compensation amendment included
24 no ratification deadline, in contrast to amendments proposed since

1 the year 1917, when Congress began the practice of including a
2 provision requiring that proposed federal constitutional
3 amendments be ratified by the states within seven years; and

4 WHEREAS, Inspired to change the focus of his research,
5 Mr. Watson submitted a paper suggesting that unratified
6 constitutional amendments from before 1917, which did not contain
7 the built-in time limit, could still be ratified, even 200 years
8 later, if they received the support of enough states; he further
9 noted in the paper that there continued to be concerns among the
10 American people relative to the methods used by members of Congress
11 to increase congressional salaries; the course instructor and her
12 teaching assistant were not convinced, however, and Mr. Watson
13 received a grade of C for the paper and a final grade of C for the
14 course overall; and

15 WHEREAS, Shortly afterward, in April 1982, Mr. Watson
16 embarked upon a labor-intensive campaign to prove the thesis of his
17 paper; he began the 10-year process of writing letters to
18 legislators in states across the nation, urging them to consider
19 ratifying the measure, and by May 5, 1992, Alabama lawmakers
20 furnished the pivotal 38th ratification, thus making it the 27th
21 Amendment to the Constitution; since then, eight more states have
22 ratified the amendment--most recently Nebraska in 2016--bringing
23 the total to 46 of the 50 states; and

24 WHEREAS, Impressed by what she publicly described as
25 Mr. Watson's "heroic effort" to prove the validity of his thesis,
26 his former professor has officially requested that his grade for
27 Government 310 be raised from a C to an A; Mr. Watson was informed

1 of her decision in March 2017, when he was invited to attend what he
2 thought would be a mere Q and A about his work on the 27th Amendment
3 and unexpectedly found his campaign being recounted in *Pop-Up*
4 *Magazine*, a live news program performed onstage and resembling a
5 stand-up comedy routine; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Watson has continued to be engaged in federal
7 constitutional amendment issues: in 1995, at his prompting, the
8 Mississippi Legislature symbolically post-ratified the
9 Constitution's 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery; at his urging,
10 the Tennessee General Assembly ceremonially post-ratified the 15th
11 Amendment in 1997, extending the right to vote to former male
12 slaves; and, at his behest, the Texas Legislature, in 2009,
13 formally endorsed the end of poll taxes by post-ratifying the 24th
14 Amendment; furthermore, references to Mr. Watson's constitutional
15 amendment-related activities are chronicled in countless books,
16 newspapers, magazines, law reviews, video and audio recordings,
17 resolutions, and entries in the *Congressional Record*; and

18 WHEREAS, Gregory Watson's dogged determination resulted in a
19 significant change in this nation's founding document, and he may
20 indeed take great pride in his achievement and in his demonstration
21 of what committed civic engagement can accomplish; now, therefore,
22 be it

23 RESOLVED, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas
24 hereby congratulate Gregory D. Watson on receiving a revised grade
25 of A in his 1982 Government 310 class at The University of Texas at
26 Austin--albeit after the intervention of 35 years--and extend to
27 him sincere best wishes for continued success and happiness; and,

1 be it further

2 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
3 prepared for Mr. Watson as an expression of high regard by the Texas
4 House of Representatives and Senate.