

OCTOBER 28

WEDNESDAY



THIS DAY | IN HISTORY

1919: Congress enforces prohibition

Congress passed the Volstead Act over President Woodrow Wilson's veto. The Volstead Act provided for the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, also known as the Prohibition Amendment. The movement for the prohibition of alcohol began in the early nineteenth century, when Americans concerned about the adverse effects of drinking began forming temperance societies. By the late nineteenth century, these groups had become a powerful political force, campaigning on the state level and calling for national liquor abstinence. In December 1917, the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes," was passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification. In January 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment achieved the necessary two-thirds majority of state ratification, and Prohibition became the law of the land. Despite a vigorous effort by law-enforcement agencies, the Volstead Act failed to prevent the large-scale distribution of alcoholic beverages, and organized crime flourished in America. In 1933 the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution was passed and ratified, repealing Prohibition.