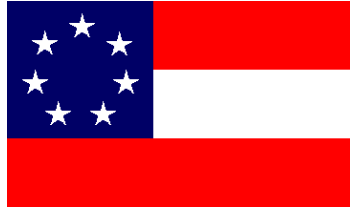
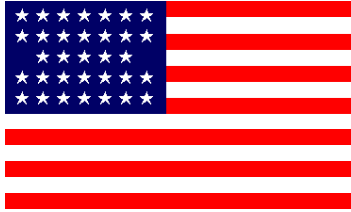


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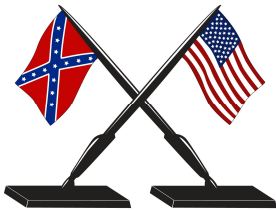


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FROM THE AUTHOR



Greetings from the writing cave here in Houston! First of all the baseball season has begun. I like the Astros now that I live in the Houston area, but I'll always be a White Sox fan. Of course that doesn't make me very

popular around here considering they beat the Astros in the 2005 World Series, but I can't change my allegiance now. The Sox are in third place as of today but it's a long season, so hopefully they can win the division for a second year in a row. Go Sox!

Second – I've begun work on the third draft of my next novel, *The Confederate Trust*. I think the story is as good as anything I've come up with, and I'm doing my best to make sure that this is my best book yet. If it doesn't exceed what I've written before, I won't publish it. There's no point to an author releasing a work if he doesn't believe it's his very best, so I'll continue working to make sure that this novel is better than ever!

And finally – my wife and I attended our first political protest on April 15. Yes, we were among the hundreds of thousands attending Tea Parties throughout the nation. While I try to avoid political issues, I felt strongly about attending not necessarily to protest the current administration but to protest the federal government (and both parties) in general.

Excessive government spending began 75 years ago under Franklin Roosevelt and is getting worse under each administration. The Federal Reserve has spent \$4 trillion in the past few months to stave off recession but expenditures are far exceeding revenue. When this happens, there are only three ways the government can generate more revenue – borrowing it, printing it, or taxing it.

The nations we have been borrowing from, most notably Communist China, have indicated they are growing reluctant to continue loaning us money. The Fed is currently printing money, which will only cause inflation (hopefully not to the extent that it did in the 1970s). The third option is taxation, which may be coming soon. It seems to me that government has grown too big too fast, and when this happens, history has proven that it becomes a hotbed for corruption and mismanagement. I believe that it's time for taxpayers to take a stand and say that excessive spending cannot continue because we simply cannot sustain it.

Time will tell how the future of our country is determined...

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MAY 1861: BUILD-UP TO BATTLE

War had begun in earnest as May 1861 opened. Fort Sumter had been fired upon less than three weeks before, and a frenzy to the flag swept across both the North and South. However there was still a sense of disbelief that war had finally come, and while most people accepted that they were at war, they didn't yet know what war meant. Some held out hope that the sides would reconcile, and at worst, one decisive battle would end the conflict. Would the North recognize the South as an independent nation? Would the South return to the Union and renounce secession? Nothing was clear yet, but people massed for action nonetheless.

In Washington, a new president and party was in power, untried and (many felt) unable to meet the task of reuniting the country. President Lincoln issued a call for volunteers to serve for three years or until the rebellion was suppressed. Throughout the month, troops poured into the capital, making it the most heavily fortified city in the world. Meanwhile U.S. marshals were dispatched to confiscate telegraph messages sent throughout the North over the past year to reveal any Northern pro-secessionist sympathies. In addition the Lincoln administration worked to keep the remaining slave states (Maryland, Delaware, Missouri and Kentucky) from joining the Confederacy.

On May 10, riots erupted in St. Louis between a Union force and pro-Confederate citizens. The Union force was led by General Nathaniel Lyon and consisted mostly of German immigrants, and the mostly pro-Confederate state militia resented the parades they staged in the city. Lyon entered the militia's headquarters at Fort Jackson disguised as a woman, made notes on their fortifications, then returned with his forces and captured the fort. During the march back from the fort, citizens rioted against the "Hessians" and about 29 people were killed when shouting turned to shooting.

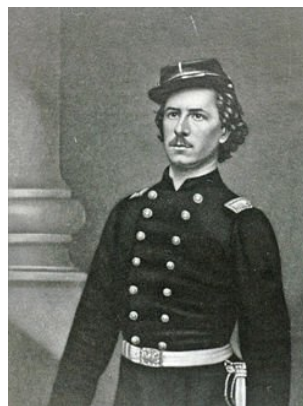
In Montgomery, Alabama, Confederate President Jefferson Davis signed a congressional resolution declaring a state of war existed between the United and Confederate States. The Confederacy began accepting volunteers to serve for the war's duration and approved loans to finance the war effort. Confederate officials knew that if they were to secure their independence they would need foreign assistance, so they set about opening diplomatic channels for the European powers of Britain and France.

In London, the British Foreign Minister received Confederate

commissioners to consider aiding the Southern war effort. In Parliament, Lord John Russell announced that Britain would recognize the Confederates as belligerents but would not recognize the Confederacy as a new nation. On May 13, Queen Victoria officially declared that Britain was neutral. Confederate emissaries continued trying to get Her Majesty to change her mind.

Throughout the month, more states voted to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy. These included Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina, bringing the total number of Confederate states to 11. Meanwhile meetings were held in Wheeling and Kingwood in western Virginia to protest Virginia's secession. This region of Virginia, along with portions of eastern Tennessee, would remain pro-Union throughout the war.

In Virginia, hostilities began in late May. Union troops occupied Alexandria across the Potomac River from Washington on May 24. The troops were led by Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, a handsome and promising young officer who was admired by many in the North including President Lincoln. Ellsworth ordered that a Confederate flag be taken down from an inn roof, and as he and his



-- Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, the dashing young officer whose death caused much grief among many in the North (including President Lincoln)

troops left the building after taking it down, the innkeeper shot Ellsworth dead. Union forces immediately killed the innkeeper, but Ellsworth's death stunned and saddened many Northerners. Funeral services for Ellsworth were held in the East Room of the White House and were attended by the Lincolns and many other U.S. dignitaries.

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Virginia would soon see much more action, as the Confederate Congress voted to move the national capital from Montgomery to the more urban and accessible Virginia capital of Richmond. Officials hoped to secure Virginia's full support in the war effort with this move, not to mention that Richmond was the largest and most industrial city in the South. Many also believed that being in Richmond would give the South military and psychological advantages in the war, even though it was only 80 miles from Washington.

The Confederate government, including President Davis, began arriving in Richmond on May 29, and the Northern war cry became, "On to Richmond!" In Alexandria, General Irvin McDowell took command of Union forces as they prepared to invade the heart of the state in an effort to capture the rebel capital. The military buildup in Virginia continued into June. A large-scale action was inevitable but nobody knew when it would happen or what its results would be. Few anticipated the horrible carnage that the war would ultimately bring.

U.S. HISTORY:

TWENTY-SEVENTH AMENDMENT PASSED 203 YEARS AFTER SUBMISSION



-- *The U.S. Capitol,
Washington, DC*

On May 5, 1992, the Twenty-Seventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified and became law. This prohibits any change in congressional salaries until the next Congress convenes. This is the most recent constitutional amendment, and it was ratified 203 years after it was first proposed in 1789. The purpose of the amendment is to restrain Congress in setting its own salary and avoid a potential conflict of interest.

This was the second of 12 amendments submitted to state legislatures for ratification on September 25, 1789. Ten of the 12 were ratified by three-fourths of the legislatures, making them law on December 15, 1791. These are known as the Bill of Rights. However this amendment fell short of the required three-fourths approval so it was not immediately ratified.

Even so, several states requested that this amendment be included in the Constitution when the state conventions

debated whether or not to ratify the Constitution in 1788, including North Carolina, Virginia and New York. Massachusetts approved this amendment in 1816, along with Kentucky and Tennessee. In 1873, Ohio approved this amendment after Congress caused a public outcry by voting to not only grant itself a 50 percent pay increase, but by making the grant retroactive.

In 1982, a college student rediscovered the "lost" amendment and helped push for ratification. Ten years later, the Alabama state legislature became the 38th state approving the act, giving it the three-fourths majority to make it law. Even though ratification came 203 years after its proposal, it was determined that since no time limit to ratify had been given in 1789, the law was valid. On May 20, 1992, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed concurrent resolutions declaring that the amendment was now in effect.

While the Twenty-Seventh Amendment prohibits pay rates from changing until a new Congress has convened, it does not prohibit "cost of living adjustments," or COLAs. This was established in *Boehner v. Anderson*, in which a federal appeals court ruled that the amendment did not apply to COLAs. However this has not yet been decided by the Supreme Court, so as of today this has not been challenged.

Primary source: www.wikipedia.org

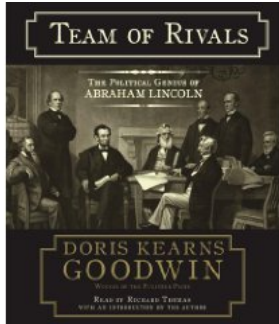
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BOOK REVIEW:

TEAM OF RIVALS by Doris Kearns Goodwin



Team of Rivals may seem to be just another biography of Abraham Lincoln, but it is really a biography of not only Lincoln but four key members of his cabinet, all of whom were his political rivals at some point and believed they could do a better job as president.

These included Secretary of State William Seward, Secretary of Treasury Salmon Chase, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Attorney General Edward Bates. Of these men, all but Stanton opposed Lincoln for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860, and all were embarrassed to have been defeated by the obscure Illinois lawyer. However, Doris Kearns Goodwin illustrates how Lincoln not only convinced them to join his administration, but how he ultimately earned their respect and admiration as well.

While Goodwin covers some familiar territory, she also offers fresh insight into Lincoln's leadership style which received much criticism from political analysts in his day but has been revered ever since. Goodwin also shows how most men in Lincoln's cabinet originally disdained his backwoods upbringing and lack of experience, but how Lincoln soothed egos, turned rivals into allies, and dealt with countless challenges to his leadership during his administration. Goodwin argues that without his political genius, Lincoln could not have guided the Union to victory in the Civil War.

This book shows why "Lincoln's road to success was longer, more torturous, and far less likely" than his rivals, and why, when opportunity called, Lincoln was "the best prepared to answer." This multiple biography also provides valuable background and insights into the contributions and talents of Seward, Chase, Stanton and Bates. Lincoln may have been "the indispensable ingredient of the Civil War," but his rivals were invaluable to Lincoln and they played key roles in securing the defeat of the South.

However Goodwin explains that Lincoln did not shift into a "master of men" overnight. Analysts during Lincoln's time called him "a fourth-rate lecturer, who cannot speak good grammar," but East Coast railroad executives knew better. These men had long employed Lincoln at huge prices to defend railroad interests as an attorney and lobbyist, and they knew that Lincoln was a shrewd political operator and insider long before he entered the White House. This is a fact that Goodwin underplays.

Criticism aside, Goodwin supplies capable biographies on both Lincoln and his rivals, and how they influenced each other in guiding the Union to victory over the Confederacy. Goodwin also ably highlights the sometimes tangled dynamics of their "team" within the larger assemblage of Lincoln's full war cabinet. This book gives good insight into how the Lincoln administration operated in prosecuting the War between the States.

Review courtesy of both Amazon.com and *Publisher's Weekly*.