

Chinese lawmakers vote to remove presidential term limits



An attendant hands out ballot papers to delegates at the third plenary session of the National People's Congress (NPC), where delegates will vote on a constitutional amendment lifting presidential term limits, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China March 11, 2018 © Jason Lee / Reuters

The Chinese National People's Congress has approved the removal of presidential term limits. The move potentially allows the incumbent leader, Xi Jinping, to remain as president for life.

The constitutional amendment that removes the previous two-term limit was passed by Chinese lawmakers on Sunday. The draft was approved almost unanimously, with only two 'no' votes and three abstentions among almost 3,000 delegates of the National People's Congress, according to Reuters.

Last month, the Central Committee of China's ruling Communist Party proposed scrapping the constitutional clause limiting the terms of office for the president and vice president. The move marks the first amendment to fundamental Chinese law in 14 years.

When the amendment was still under discussion, US President Donald Trump reportedly praised the move towards a potential "*president for life*" in China.

"I think it's great. Maybe we'll give that a shot some day," Trump is said to have commented at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

However, he later insisted that the comments were merely a joke.

Xi became the seventh president of China in 2013. He also serves as the chairman of the Central Military Commission and as general secretary of the Communist Party of China. While the latter positions are considered more important, the passage of the amendment means that all the posts now have no formal term limits, Reuters reports.

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