Q5 – How are changes made to the U.S. Constitution?

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
The Constitution is changed by amendment. The Framers gave us the Constitution in order to form “a more perfect union.” And they gave us the leeway to amend the Constitution in order to make it still “more perfect” as the times change. But it isn’t easy, and it isn’t to be done lightly.

An amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the House of Representatives and two-thirds of the Senate – and by three-fourths of the states. Critics claim it’s too hard to amend the Constitution. But it’s designed to be hard – because a government should be stable. But there are times when making a change is absolutely critical.
After the Civil war for example, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments extended the equal protection of the laws to all citizens and protected the right to vote. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote – the greatest expansion of liberty in our history. These Amendments and others gave us a “more perfect union” just as the Framers intended.