

DEAR USMNEWS.NET

Dear usmnews.net,

Your report about Mississippi ratifying the 13th Amendment [abolishing slavery] 148 years late should have embarrassed every citizen of Mississippi. Apparently, *The Hattiesburg American* was only embarrassed that someone reported on it.

A few hours after your [breaking news] [report](#), *The Hattiesburg American* proudly proclaimed, [Mississippi ratified 13th Amendment in 1995](#) [instead of 2013]. According to *THA*,

“The state of Mississippi has corrected a clerical error that left unrecorded ratification of the 13th Amendment for 18 years.

The Legislature formally ratified the amendment, which outlawed slavery, in 1995. However, the ratification document was never presented to the U.S. Archivist, so it was never official.”

So, *THA* thinks its okay because Mississippi finally ratified the Thirteenth Amendment only 130 years late? This is nothing of which the State of Mississippi or *THA* should be proud. In fact, stupid articles like the one *THA* published boasting that ratification of the 13th Amendment happened only 130 years late only adds to the perception that Mississippi is populated by a bunch of not very bright racists.

Name withheld

Dear Name withheld,

Thank you for your letter to the editor. Your letter and comments of a number of other readers stand as proof that, to quote one reader, “not everyone in Mississippi is a stupid racist.”

Let me offer a brief history lesson that amplifies your comments.

In January 1864, Congress voted for the 13th Amendment.

The measure went to the states for ratification.

With Georgia’s vote to ratify the 13th Amendment, on December 6, 1865, the amendment received the three-fourths' vote it needed to become law.

In 1995 (accepting *THA*’s report as accurate) -- or **131 years after Congressional approval** of the 13th Amendment, and **130 years after the 13th Amendment became the law of the land** -- Mississippi finally voted to ratify the 13th Amendment.

For 18 years, no Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi could be bothered to take that simple step of sending notice of the ratification to the Office of the Federal Register.

This is not the first time Mississippi has been slow in doing the right thing. Oceola McCarty, a black laundress, who gave The University of Southern Mississippi her life savings received an honorary doctorate from [Harvard University](#) two years before The University of Southern Mississippi -- the school that was the beneficiary of her generosity -- would extend an award to Ms. McCarty.

Clyde Kennard was tried, convicted and sent to Parchman for a crime he did not commit. What was his real "crime"? Mr. Kennard had committed the unforgivable sin of seeking to be admitted to the Mississippi Southern (now the University of Southern Mississippi). In 2006, [former Governor Haley Barbour](#) refused to issue a posthumous pardon formally clearing Mr. Kennard's name and giving his family some well-earned measure of peace. Why? Among many possible reasons, take a look at what interim President Lucas told [The New York Times](#). "Mr. Lucas said pardoning Mr. Kennard might cost Mr. Barbour a few votes."

So, *Hattiesburg American*, would you like to tell us again that the 13th Amendment was ratified in 1995 instead of 2013?