

# No Uncertain Terms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TERM LIMITS MOVEMENT • MARCH/APRIL 2016 • VOLUME 24 • No. 2

## Early Progress Toward a Term Limits Convention

Thanks to the efforts of term limits supporters like you, we've made a strong start toward calling a Term Limits Convention that enables states to consider a term limits constitutional amendment without the cooperation of a single entrenched incumbent in DC.

Thirty-four state legislatures must issue a formal call for such a convention — the business of which can be limited to a single specific topic — in order for it to be convened. It's early days in the campaign, but Term Limits Convention bills have been or are about to be filed in Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah. In several of those states — Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, and Utah — the bills were not successful in the current session. Those bills can of course be reintroduced in future sessions, and we will be working to have the Term Limits Convention bill introduced in many other states as well.



BREAKING NEWS: FLORIDA PASSES THE  
**TERM LIMITS CONVENTION**

The Florida Legislature just made history. It is the first in the nation to make the call for the Term Limits Convention to term limit Congress. When 34 states have signed on, we can finally take our Congress back from career politicians!

**PLEASE SHARE**

**Colorado.** As we go to press, we're expecting State Senator Kevin Lundberg to file a Term Limits Convention bill in the Colorado legislature.

(Continued on Page 3)

## USTL Releases Jack Abramoff Video on How to “see pigs screeching at the trough”

U.S. Term Limits has released a brief but powerful video ([bit.ly/1RxSmV0](http://bit.ly/1RxSmV0)) in which notorious former lobbyist Jack Abramoff explains why only term limits can prevent lobbyists from buying off congressmen just as he used to do.

“Jack Abramoff spent decades rising in the GOP ranks to become one of Washington’s biggest lobbyists,” says USTL President Phil Blumel. “Then his crooked empire crumbled under bribery and fraud charges in 2006.

“He may have been one of the more egregious abusers of the system, but the way he did business is not the outlier that others in Washington doing the same things would like you to believe.”

Today Abramoff is no longer a lobbyist, but instead spends much of his time speaking out against the chronic

(Continued on Page 3)



JACK ABRAMOFF  
FORMER LOBBYIST

0:35 / 1:01



# President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

Something important — and applause-worthy — happened in Washington recently. Representatives Ron DeSantis (R-FL) and Rod Blum (R-IA) took to the House floor this March to advocate term limits on Congress.

DeSantis and Blum are both signers of the U.S. Term Limits Pledge (bit.ly/1oMpekM), which calls for a constitutional amendment imposing a maximum tenure of three terms (six years) in the House and two terms (12 years) in the Senate. DeSantis has introduced the U.S. Term Limits Amendment bill in the House, and Blum recently formed the Term Limits Caucus in that chamber.

“We talk about division in politics,” DeSantis said. “But if you look, term limits is something that, regardless of party, regardless of ideology, regardless of gender, regardless of race, Americans support in overwhelming numbers.”

He’s right. According to Gallup, 75 percent of Americans support returning Congress to the people.

“This is the first elected office I’ve ever held,” Congressman Blum said. “I’m a career small businessperson. In the private sector, if we don’t listen to our customers, we go out of business. In Congress, our customers are the American people, and they are strongly in favor of term limits.”

Now, we’re under no illusions about Congress. We know that most of the career politicians there don’t favor term limits. But that’s what DeSantis and Blum are saying — that government ultimately belongs to the people, not the politicians, however much the latter act as if it’s the other way around. You can listen to DeSantis speak at bit.ly/1Vh15EI and Blum at bit.ly/1VAbRUv.

What if DeSantis, Blum and like-minded congressmen can’t convert enough of their colleagues to turn their minority view of term limits into the majority view, and finally move a term limit amendment out of Congress? Well, we’ll just have to bypass Congress altogether then. See our new Article V education video about how we can do that through a Term Limits Convention at <http://bit.ly/1ThycSO> and share our animated primer with friends and family.

We need every American to know that Congress can be restored — and how we can do it.

Visit us at [termlimits.org](http://termlimits.org) to sign up for our e-newsletter.  
And check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/USTermLimits/](https://facebook.com/USTermLimits/)

## MARCH/APRIL 2016

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### US TERM LIMITS FOUNDATION

U.S. Term Limits – DC Office  
1250 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 261-3532 – Phone

[info@ustl.org](mailto:info@ustl.org) – Email  
[www.termlimits.org](http://www.termlimits.org) – Web

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“It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error.”

-- U.S. Supreme Court in *American Communications Association v. Douds*

## Early Progress (Cont'd from page 1)

**Florida.** Florida's legislature was the first out of the gate, calling for a Term Limits Convention in early February. Thanks for breaking the ice, Florida! Visit <http://bit.ly/1p2ya6n> to read the Sunshine State News story about the passage. USTL's page on our success in the Florida ("You Did It") is at [termlimits.org/florida](http://termlimits.org/florida). If you're a Floridian, there's still plenty you can do to help make the Convention happen. (See the action-step box below.)

**Missouri.** The TLC bill HJR 86 has been assigned to the House Government Oversight and Accountability Committee. SCR 61 was assigned to — and has been passed by — the senate rules committee. Click into [termlimits.org/missouri](http://termlimits.org/missouri) for updates.

**South Carolina.** The TLC bills that have been introduced are H 4739 and S 1046. Visit [bit.ly/264QGNg](http://bit.ly/264QGNg) for updates.

**Tennessee.** Term Limits Convention bill HJR 517 was assigned to the state government subcommittee, but an anti-term-limits legislator killed it for the 2016

session, not allowing it to emerge from that subcommittee, despite the hundreds of supporters who contacted him to urge him to do so.

**Utah.** The Term Limits Convention bill passed a floor vote but did not make it out of the full legislature.

TERM · LIMITS  
CONVENTION

Make Washington accountable by  
imposing term limits on Congress.

On each of the USTL action pages devoted to individual target states, you will be able to sign up to receive our newsletters. So if you happen not to surf in right after an exciting development, don't worry: we'll zap the news to your IN box. Sign Up!

## Abramoff Video (Cont'd from page 1)

corruption that made him rich and infamous.

"Congress will never be fixed without term limits," Abramoff says in the video. "And I should know. I used to be one of the biggest lobbyists in Washington...."

"When I was a lobbyist, I hated the idea that a congressman that I had bought with years of contributions would decide to retire. That meant I had to start all over again with a new member, losing all the control I bought with years of

checks....

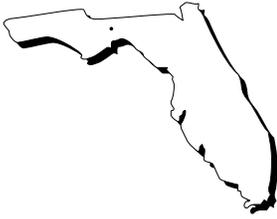
"If you want to see pigs screeching at the trough, tell them they can't stay there forever. There's no trough as dangerous as the one in Washington."

If you can spare a minute — actually, one minute and two seconds — listen to Abramoff's entire candid message right now at [bit.ly/1RxSmV0](http://bit.ly/1RxSmV0) and share it with others.

## Help Make the Term Limits Convention Happen

1. Visit [termlimits.org/ustl-petition](http://termlimits.org/ustl-petition) to sign the U.S. Term Limits Petition.
2. If the Term Limits Convention bill has not already been introduced in your state, ask your state representative and state senator to accept the honor of doing so. [Openstates.org](http://Openstates.org) will give you their contact info.
3. Learn more about the convention method of sending a constitutional amendment to the states by reading Robert Natelson's "Amending the Constitution by Convention: Practical Guidance for Citizens and Policymakers," published by the Independence Institute. Visit [bit.ly/1oSv70G](http://bit.ly/1oSv70G) to download the free PDF.
4. Ask the executive committee of your county party to pass a resolution in support of the Term Limits Convention. An example of such a resolution, which passed in Palm Beach County, is at [bit.ly/1SuOQeh](http://bit.ly/1SuOQeh)
5. Visit [www.termlimits.org/donate-2/](http://www.termlimits.org/donate-2/) to back USTL's campaign call a Term Limits Convention with your donation.

# Term Limits



## FLORIDA

In late February, the Florida house approved a measure that to ask voters to limit the justices of the state supreme court to 12 years. But the political hurdles for such a term limit are higher in the state senate. At present Florida justices may serve until a mandatory retirement age of 70.

*Orlando, FL.* A group called Eight Is Enough Orlando ([EightIsEnoughOrlando.com](http://EightIsEnoughOrlando.com)) is collecting signatures for a ballot measure to limit the city's mayor and commissioners to eight consecutive years in office. "For too long," states the outfit's web site, "career politicians in the Mayor's office and on the City Council have been able to serve indefinitely, while all other elected officials in Central Florida have strict term-limits." About 15,000 valid petition signatures are needed to bring the measure to ballot.

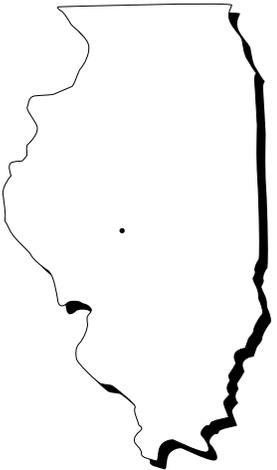


## GEORGIA

*Roswell, GA.* By a 4-2 vote, the Roswell city council has passed a charter amendment to limit themselves to three consecutive four-year terms in office, not counting terms served before 2017. The term limit must be approved by the state legislature before it can be enacted. But Roswell's mayor, Jere Wood, first elected in 1997, is a firm foe of the measure, saying that he fears that it would lead to a dearth of candidates. Wood promised when first running for the seat that would serve no more than two terms as mayor. His current term is his fifth.

## ILLINOIS

In a state where the pro-term-limits Governor Bruce Rauner continues to be at loggerheads with state lawmakers and other entrenched members of the Illinois political class — who oppose even the faintest glimmer of a wisp of any substantive political reform — voters continue to massively support term limits and other structural improvements of the status quo. A recent survey conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute finds that two thirds of voters in the state support redistricting reform and 78% support term limits on state lawmakers. Measures addressing both were blocked from reaching the ballot in 2014 despite overwhelming public support.



*Alsip, IL.* In a mid-March decision, 81% of village voters backed a measure to limit the mayor and village trustees to three consecutive terms. The measure had been referred to the ballot by the trustees, who did so despite a veto by the third-term mayor.

*Homer Glen, IL.* At the same time, Homer Glen voters passed a more limited but more limiting term limit, a two-term cap on tenure albeit only on their mayor, by the even larger majority of 89%. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, several voters interviewed "cited House Speaker Michael Madigan as an elected official who should not be re-elected." Madigan has been in the house since 1971 and its speaker for all but two years (1995-1996) since 1983.

*Crestwood, IL.* The Crestwood village board unanimously referred a measure to the November ballot that asks voters to approve a limit on the tenure of village officials of three consecutive four-year terms.

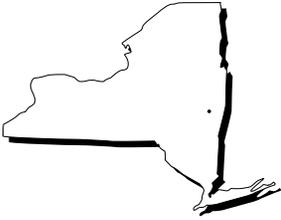
## LOUISIANA



*St. Tammany Parish, LA.* In early March, voters by the overwhelming majority of 83% approved term limits of three four-year terms on Parish council members. A local group supporting term limits, Concerned Citizens of St. Tammany (CCST), had pushed the council to refer a term limit question to the ballot, but was unhappy with the 12-year limit that voters were asked to approve. Moreover, the limit does not begin to go into effect until 2020. CCST had wanted voters to consider a maximum tenure of two four-year terms. In a public letter, it argued that the council "[has structured] the voter choices to serve

# in the News

their own self-interest. Their scheme is...a trick to perpetuate their incumbency until at least the year 2032, regardless of the vote.”

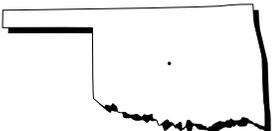


## NEW YORK

New York State’s Reform Party has the right idea about how institutions outside of government should be exerting pressure to make term limits happen. This year it won’t even consider nominating any state-level candidates who push for term limits *right now*. Says Reform Party Chairman Bill Merrill: “We’re going to make things very simple for 2016. We will only consider granting ballot status to candidates who demand a floor vote on term limits in Albany this year. It’s been a long time since we’ve had a true citizen legislature of the type our founders envisioned; only term limits can deliver one back to the people.”

And here’s Reform Party Treasurer Patrick Ziegler: “We do expect that any candidate who receives the Reform Party endorsement will advocate for an up-or-down vote on term limits for senators and assembly people.”

New York is perhaps the state where the most non-incumbents (i.e., ordinary voters) agree the most vehemently that state lawmakers should be finally, finally, finally subject to term limits in light of all the billowing and endless corruption in the state legislature. (We concede that Illinois and a few other states with un-term-limited legislatures may also be in the running for this...honor.)



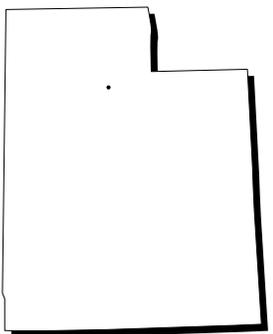
## OKLAHOMA

It’s up to the Oklahoma house now to decide whether voters will consider a measure to increase the term limits on the lieutenant governor, attorney general, insurance commissioner, and several other statewide officers from eight years to 12 years. The tenure-lengthening measure was approved 32-12 by the state senate. It must now get past the house before going to voters.



## TENNESSEE

*Shelby County, TN.* Shelby County has a three-strikes approach to posting referendums to the ballot. The commissioners must consider a proposal on three separate readings. On March 7, they rejected a referendum to eliminate two-term limits on commissioners and other county officers with six no votes, three yes votes, and three abstentions. On the second reading, March 28, the question failed five no votes to three yes votes, with another three commissioners “either not voting or formally abstaining.” But the third and final reading of the proposal, originally scheduled for April 11, has been deferred at the behest of its sponsor until May.



## UTAH

In March the Utah Supreme Court declined to rule on whether the lieutenant governor of the state, Spencer Cox, abused his authority by blocking a petition drive that would have put on the ballot a question on term-limiting appointees to state boards and commissions. Utah Term Limits NOW! had asked that the court to force Cox to rescind his rejection of its application. But, failing a timely decision from the court, the group was obliged to abandon its attempt to get the question on this year’s ballot. Then, precisely because Cox *did* indeed succeed in stopping the petition drive, the high court unanimously declined to rule on whether he had done wrong, perversely declared the case “moot” — as if initiative rights in the state will never be exercised again, nor in a way inconvenient to officeholders inclined to illicitly prevent that exercise of initiative rights.

# WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

## Let the People Term-Limit You

“Even if legislators don’t really support applying term limits to themselves, they should at least be willing to give the people of South Carolina a chance to consider the matter. That could be done by a statewide referendum. And if legislators aren’t willing to advance that idea directly they could let their constituents do so by giving them the right of initiative petition.

“That would allow South Carolina voters to circulate a petition on policy issues, such as legislative term limits, in an effort to put a binding referendum on the ballot. The process of initiative petition is allowed in about half of the states.

“It’s no coincidence that in many of those states, the voters have forced the term-limits issue on their own.”

— **“Start small with S.C. term limits,”** editorial, *The Post and Courier*, February 23, 2016, [bit.ly/1T5COOH](http://bit.ly/1T5COOH)

## The “Bad News” is the Good News

“‘The good news is we have a lot of committee chairmen from Texas,’ said U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis, [Texas,] a former chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. ‘The bad news is that once they’ve served their six years, if we stay in the majority, then they will rotate.’

“Unlike Democrats, House Republicans ensure that chairmen of the House committees must give up their posts after three terms, or six years. The GOP put in place term limits on committee chairs as part of the ‘Republican Revolution’ reforms installed after the party won the House in 1994. Of the seven House chairmanships Texans currently hold, almost all are scheduled to hand over their gavels sometime in the next five years.”

— **“In U.S. House, Texans’ Seats of Power Have Expiration Dates,”** Abby Livingston, *The Texas Tribune*, March 27, 2016, [bit.ly/1q8gN5y](http://bit.ly/1q8gN5y)

## South Carolina Legislature Also Needs Term Limits

“Now, perhaps more than any time in recent memory, our state’s problems call for real, meaningful reform.

“But I truly believe there’s one reform which holds the key to the rest—term limits for members of the Legislature.

“Over the past year, as I’ve closely followed the State Legislature and researched the various reform proposals which have been offered over the years, one thing has become clear: Career politicians are the root of many of our state’s problems.

“You see, there a lot of good, common-sense reform ideas introduced each year to restore efficiency and accountability to state government. And it’s almost always the politicians who have held office the longest who block these needed reforms.

“When legislators hold office for too long, it seems, they tend to resist change — even badly needed changes.”

— **“It’s time for real reform — including term limits,”** Bryan Clifton, candidate for South Carolina house, *The New Irmo News*, April 11, 2016, [bit.ly/1SSg5Qo](http://bit.ly/1SSg5Qo)

## Subscribe to Our E-Newsletter!

**Not subscribed to the U.S. Term Limits e-letter? It’s the very fastest way to get the very newest news about efforts to call a Term Limits Convention, who’s signing the Term Limits Pledge, and other exciting news about USTL initiatives and term limits generally. Right in your IN box. Just go to the [termlimits.org](http://termlimits.org) home page and enter your email address in the field right under the words “Sign Up to receive our Newsletters!” Then click the blue button that says “Sign Up!”**



# WHAT THE USTL E-LETTER IS SAYING

## **February 23: Term Limits Convention Progress in Six States**

“We are on a roll! Thanks to your effort, there are now Term Limits Convention bills filed in Alaska, Tennessee, South Carolina, Missouri, Georgia, and Alabama! And of course Florida has already passed the legislation.”

— **“Term Limits Convention Resolutions Filed in Six States,” Alannah NicPhaidin, U.S. Term Limits e-newsletter, February 23, 2016**

## **March 8: Term Limits Convention Progress in Utah**

“Career politicians in Congress aren’t going to like this. Last night, the Utah State House of Representatives passed the Term Limits Convention bill!

“If the State Senate also votes for passage, it will make Utah the second state in the nation (after Florida) to call for an amendment-proposing convention to put term limits on Congress.”

— **“Term Limits Convention Passes Utah House!,” Nick Tomboulides, U.S. Term Limits e-letter, March 8, 2016**

## **March 9: Fighting for Freedom Isn’t Free**

“US Term Limits organizers are systematically working their way across the country.

“We have operatives and allies fighting for the Term Limits Convention in twelve different states including Utah.

“We have the professional politicians on the run. We hope to be able to pass Term Limits Convention legislation in every single one of these states soon.

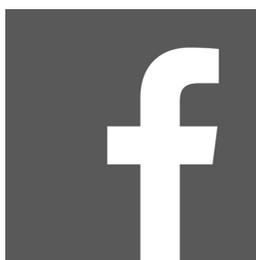
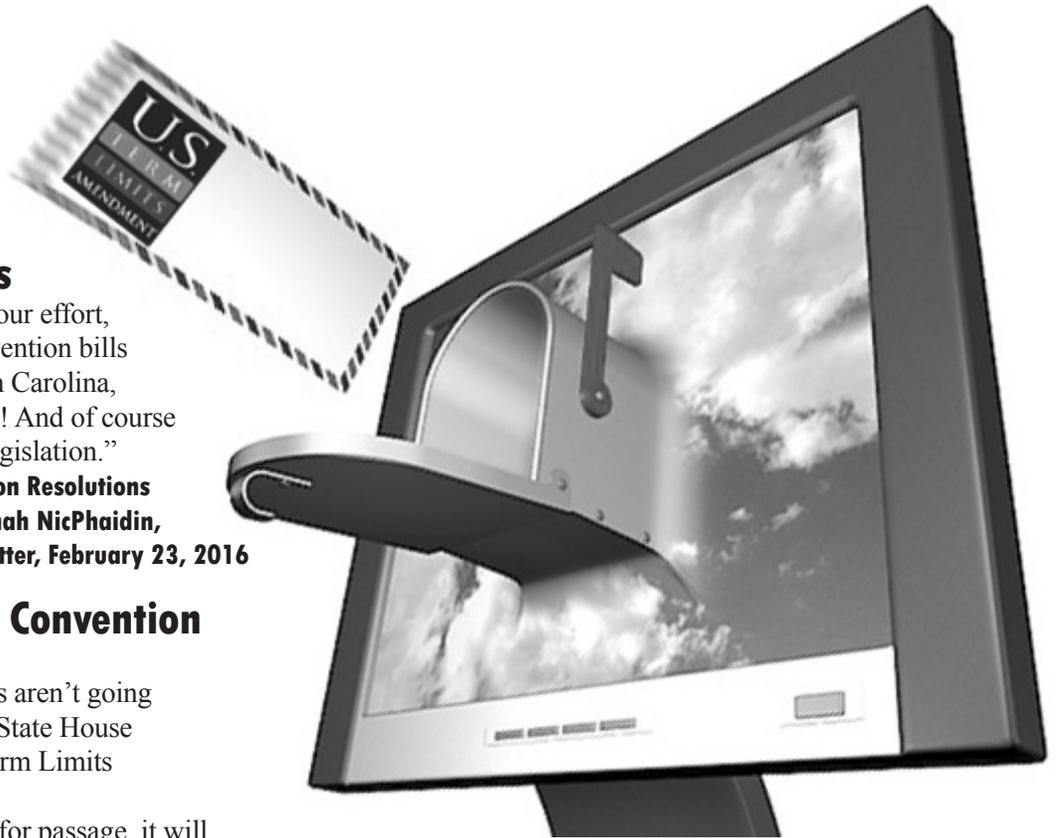
“However, these are going to be hard fights. They are going to be *expensive* fights.”

— **“Utah votes Thursday,” Phil Blumel, U.S. Term Limits e-letter, March 9, 2016**

## **April 4: Movement in Missouri**

“Big news in Missouri!!! Your bill, SCR 61 (HCR 86), passed through the State Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics Committee *unanimously!* That is right. All the members of the committee voted for your bill. Over one thousand people wrote in to the members to show their support for the bill. This just shows how much impact the people can have on their government when they get directly involved. The next step in the Missouri State Senate is a floor vote. Let’s keep the momentum going!”

— **“Important Term Limits Update,” Alannah NicPhaidin, U.S. Term Limits e-letter, April 4, 2016**



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1250 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

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**— Jack Abramoff, infamous former lobbyist  
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