

# No Uncertain Terms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TERM LIMITS MOVEMENT • MAY/JUNE 2017 • VOLUME 25 • No. 3

## Pledge Signers Gianforte, Norman, and Handel Win Special Elections

Three signers of the U.S. Term Limits Pledge — Republicans Greg Gianforte in Montana, Ralph Norman in South Carolina, and Karen Handel in Georgia — have won recent special elections. Their signatures commit them to cosponsor and support the constitutional amendment to limit congressional terms.



**Greg Gianforte.**



**Ralph Norman.**



**Karen Handel.**

The elections, especially those in Montana and Georgia, had drawn national attention as battlegrounds between the two major national parties. But of course U.S. Term Limits and our supporters were most interested to

**Pro and Con Term Limits At The Same Time** p. 2

learn to what extent the internal pressure on Congress to pass the amendment might be intensified.

All three Republicans won their contests by fairly small margins.

On May 25, Gianforte defeated Rob Quist with 50.6% of the vote.

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## USTL Helps Foil FL Rep's Scam to Evade Term Limits, Double His Tenure, and Grab Speakership

James Grant is in his seventh year as a Florida State representative. That means he's about to be termed out of office; the Florida state legislature is governed by the "Eight Is Enough" term limits law that voters passed in 1992. Yet during the current legislative session, Grant sought to gain the right to stand for reelection despite his impending term limit.

Grant claimed, incredibly, that his status with respect to term limits was that of a freshman legislator, citing as "evidence" for this contention a brief hiatus in his service a few years ago after an election had to be conducted again because of an irregularity. (A write-in candidate had been

improperly dropped from the ballot.) Pure illogic, but all Grant cared about was whether his random argument could secure a doubling of his tenure.

We've run into this guy before. In a June 16 article for Sunshine State News ([bit.ly/2sNmVKK](http://bit.ly/2sNmVKK)). USTL Executive Director Nick Tomboulides recalled that Grant's antipathy to term limits has been clear at least since 2014, when he introduced a bill to weaken the eight-year term limit "and implied that he would like to see it removed entirely."

Nick observed that if Grant's claim were universally upheld — i.e., that any brief interruption of tenure could

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## President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

Some politicians are pro and con term limits at the same time. They know the public wants term limits, so they “want” them too. At least unless and until the term limits affect themselves.

An example is Missouri Representative Dean Plocher, a real-life incarnation of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

As the calm and reasonably pro-term-limit Dr. Jekyll, Plocher has introduced House Joint Resolution 35 to limit statewide officials — lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, auditor — to two elected terms (or to one elected term if serving more than two years of a partial term). Plocher says: “I don’t like carveouts. I think what’s good for the goose is good for the gander.” So term-limit everybody in Missouri elective office, not just state lawmakers. Seems perfectly reasonable.

But then Plocher drinks the logic-altering potion, and in the guise of the horrific Mr. Hyde also introduces House Resolution 35 (not a typo; it’s the same resolution), which would bloat the current eight-year maximum tenure in a state legislative chamber by 50% — to 12 years: “No one elected to serve in the general assembly at an election held after November 1, 2018, shall be elected to serve more than twelve years in any one house of the general assembly or more than sixteen years total in both houses of the general assembly.”

It is by now an old political trick among incumbent state legislators trying to undo term limits to pretend that retaining the same “overall” term limit for two legislative chambers while massively weakening term limits on the offices of one chamber does not massively weaken the term limit. Obviously, the strength of a term limit must always be assessed with respect to the impact on one particular office, the one primarily affected by that term limit. Yet if Plocher’s proposal is enacted, a legislator’s maximum tenure in one seat would be inflated by 50%. And, of course, any such lengthening of maximum tenure, once achieved, can only encourage incumbents in further attempts to weaken term limits or even repeal them.

So Dr. Jekyll proposes a solid term limit for the statewide offices, while Mr. Hyde simultaneously works to undermine state legislative term limits. If the measure gets to the ballot box, Missouri voters will have to decide whether to accept the step backward to get the step forward.

Same resolution; two sharply contradictory provisions; shocking split personality.

Visit Phil Blumel’s blog at [pblumel.blogspot.com](http://pblumel.blogspot.com).

Visit USTL’s Facebook page at [on.fb.me/U0b1kG](https://on.fb.me/U0b1kG).

### MAY/JUNE 2017

A publication of

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For the latest developments on term limits across America, visit our web site on the Internet at [www.termlimits.org](http://www.termlimits.org)

No Uncertain Terms is published bimonthly. Third class postage paid, Washington, DC.

POSTMASTER:  
Send address changes to:  
U.S. Term Limits Foundation  
1250 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

“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*

## Grant Gambit (Cont'd from page 1)

serve to start the term limits clock all over again — term limits would be effectively abolished. All that any incumbent need do to acquire “freshman” status would be to “resign a few minutes before the end of term.”

In commentary at the U.S. Term Limits site on the “ugly hubris” of the move ([bit.ly/2sWVckJ](http://bit.ly/2sWVckJ)), USTL President Phil Blumel observed that if Grant’s cynical ploy to ignore his term limit succeeds, “he will be dragging his party through the muck, as surely both controversy and litigation will dog their would-be leader from next Friday until he leaves office. It will also be a slap in the face for voters who approved the 8-year term limits law by 77% back in 1992. Polls show there has been no diminution of support for the law since then.”

To help thwart the scam, USTL set up a page ([bit.ly/2sWSvQg](http://bit.ly/2sWSvQg)) through which Florida voters could communicate their displeasure with Grant’s assault on term limits to their state representatives.

A major reason for the silly and brazen gambit was Grant’s bid to become a speaker of the house in 2022. That ambition has now been squelched by other representatives thanks in part to the efforts of U.S. Term Limits to publicize the power grab. The vote for 2022 speaker was held on June 30, when Grant lost to Representative Paul Renner after a single round of voting.



**Non-freshman James Grant.**

## Pledge Signers Win (Cont'd from page 1)

On June 20, Norman defeated Archie Parnell with 50.31% of the vote, after having emerged from a large Republican field in which “every single major GOP candidate...signed a term limits pledge administered by U.S. Term Limits,” in the words of FITSNews. “The issue was a featured agenda item for each of the major campaigns and dominated early press coverage in the race.”

Also on June 20, Handel beat Jon Ossoff by about 52% of the vote in what turned out to be the costliest House campaign in history as Democrats from around the country hoped that an Ossoff victory would revive Democratic fortunes, at least symbolically.

Given how narrow the margins were, the formal term limits pledges of the three candidates may well have made a difference against their opponents, none of whom signed the U.S. Term Limits Pledge. The Pledge commits the signer, should he or she become a member of Congress, to “cosponsor and vote for the U.S. Term Limits amendment of three (3) House terms and two (2) Senate terms and no longer limit.”

During the Georgia campaign, USTL President Phil Blumel pointed out that “Handel signed the U.S. Term Limits pledge immediately, vowing if elected to sponsor and vote for a constitutional amendment limiting the House to three terms (six years) and the Senate to two terms (12 years).

“Jon Ossoff has refused to sign the pledge or throw his support behind congressional term limits. While Ossoff runs on a platform of changing Washington, he is not supporting the one change that can permanently disempower career politicians and give Congress back to the people.”

The three new congressmen will bring the number of amendment cosponsors to 37.

“Of course, Congress alone will not be enough to get the amendment passed,” Phil told USTL supporters in a special bulletin in late June after the special election results were in. (Visit our homepage, [termlimits.org](http://termlimits.org), to sign up for our updates if you’re not already getting them.) “The states have to do their part by passing the Term Limits Convention. Only a synergy between these two amendment strategies will get the job done.

“Always remember: we can do this. Each day we move a bit closer to our ultimate goal: term limits on the Congress of the United States.”



**Visit U.S. Term Limits on Facebook and Help Us Make Congressional Term Limits Happen: [on.fb.me/U0blkG](https://on.fb.me/U0blkG)**

# Term Limits



## CALIFORNIA

*Tustin, CA.* By a 4-1 vote, Tustin's city council has approved an ordinance to impose term limits on city commissions of two four-year terms. The city has three five-member commissions, a planning commission, a community services commission, and an audit commission, whose members have often been simply reappointed without any public call for other candidates. The dissenter is city council member Becky Gomez, who would have preferred three consecutive two-year terms, with the individual term length remaining unchanged and a shorter maximum tenure. "We've always had two-year terms but no term limits."



## DELAWARE

*Harrington, DE.* When Anthony Moyer won election as Harrington's mayor in 2013, one item on his agenda was imposing term limits on the mayor and council members — eight consecutive years for the mayor, nine for council members. Enacting the term limits required the state legislature to approve the change in the city charter, and on May 3 the legislature did so. "This is something I've wanted since I ran for mayor," Moyer says. "Every office needs new blood. It's amazing when people say, 'yea, go for it,' but only for the higher levels of leadership and not them." It was Moyer's own tie-breaking vote that in February got the legislation out of the council.



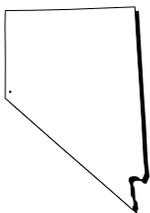
## FLORIDA

*Jacksonville, FL.* Jacksonville councilman Matt Schellenberg wants to get rid of the two-term limit on council members that was passed 25 years ago (then thrown out by court order, then reinstated). Two terms aren't enough time to get things done, he says. He also says local term limits would be great if all counties and cities in Florida were term-limited; but they're not. "If everyone was term-limited in the county and city area, that would be great, but only 37 percent of us are." If his ordinance passes, a referendum asking voters to repeal council term limits would be placed on the ballot in November 2018. Visit the City of Jacksonville web site at [bit.ly/2sX2aGz](http://bit.ly/2sX2aGz) to find contact info for Jacksonville council members. Pompano, FL. Petitions are being distributed to place a measure on the November 2018 ballot to, among other things, limit the terms of the mayor and city commissioners to eight years in office. For more information, email [TomTerwilliger@hotmail.com](mailto:TomTerwilliger@hotmail.com).



## GEORGIA

*Marietta, GA.* Marietta Mayor Steve Tumlin says Marietta may impose term limits of three four-year terms on the city council and on himself even though the legislative delegation of Cobb County has failed to advance a bill to impose these term limits. Three out of five members of the local delegation would have had to sign off on the bill in order for it to proceed, a majority that was not obtained. Georgia statute stipulates in what ways local governments may alter their charters, saying that the scope of home rule excludes "action affecting the composition and form of the municipal governing authority...and the continuance in office and limitation thereon for such members," which is why the sanction of the state legislature had been sought. But Tumlin says Marietta has the authority to proceed anyway, and he doesn't seem to be bothered by the prospect of a legal challenge. "We're basically asserting our right as an independent government to home rule. That's in the Georgia Constitution."



## NEVADA

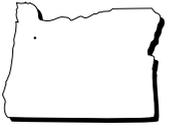
*Reno, Nevada.* The Nevada Senate has dropped consideration of an amendment to the charter of the city of Reno that would have exempted the office of mayor from the term limits that apply to other council members and allowed termed-out council members to run for mayor. Currently, the mayor is regarded as a council member who is subject to the same term limits as the other members. Mayor Hillary Schieve withdrew the amendment "based on feedback" and hurried to say that the amendment was "not about veto power and it wasn't about term limits."



## NEW YORK

In April the New York state senate (again) passed legislation to impose eight-year limits on state and assembly leaders, but the question is whether the assembly will follow suit. The senate already has term limits on leadership positions, but only in obedience to senate rules, not as a matter of law. State Senator Joseph Griffo has also sponsored a bill to term-limit state officials including the governor, attorney general and state legislators.

# In The News



## OREGON

Bud Pierce, a medical doctor and a former Republican nominee for Oregon governor, has submitted signatures for a ballot question on limiting the tenure of Oregon lawmakers to eight consecutive years. One thousand verified signatures are required to qualify a petition for review and for a ballot title; Pierce has submitted 1,170 to the secretary of state.

Unfortunately, the proposed measure is statutory, which means that even if ultimately passed by voters, state lawmakers could modify it at will. Oregonians passed state legislative term limits in 1992, but the Oregon Supreme Court tossed them in 2002 on procedural grounds.

“While there are term limits for Oregon’s Governor, Secretary of State, and Treasurer,” writes Pierce at his blog ([bit.ly/2sWGLgr](http://bit.ly/2sWGLgr)), “there are no term limits for members of Oregon’s State Senate or State House of Representatives. At the founding of our state, our state government was weak and only had minor impact on the daily lives of Oregon’s citizens. Over the past 158 years, the size and influence of federal, state, and local government has increased dramatically. Citizens labor from January into May to pay their increasing burden of taxes. The laws and rules of federal, state, and local governments number in the millions. Because of the power of Oregon’s state government, the 90 elected members of Oregon’s Senate and House have enormous impact on the daily lives of Oregon’s citizens through their rule-making and taxation policies.

“Sadly, Oregon’s legislature is failing Oregon’s citizens....

“In every election, challengers do arise to take on no-action incumbent politicians. Yet, incumbents win due to the power of special interests, control of the bureaucracy and control of the press. What is the answer?

“We should return to the wisdom of the writers of Oregon’s Constitution. Let us term limit Oregon’s legislators to eight years of service out of every 12 years. This will allow new people to step forward to be elected to legislative office and new opportunities to solve our intractable problems. Term limits will allow legislators to step away from the Legislature, to re-connect with Oregon regular citizens as non-politicians, and to still stand for re-election. This is the balance that we are looking for; this is the way to create great legislative bodies.

“Let us work together to make term limits happen to give Oregonians a chance to solve our state’s problems and move forward.”



**Selma and Bud Pierce.**

**Douglas County, OR.** Supporters of a home-rule charter for Douglas County need to gather 3,000 signatures to place a question about the charter on the ballot. If the charter is passed, the county’s three-person board of commissioners would become a five-person board and be subject to eight-year term limits. County voters passed term limits in 2014 by a 70 percent majority. But one of the commissioners at the time, Susan Morgan, challenged the term limit in court, and it was overturned.



## PENNSYLVANIA

**Allentown, PA.** On June 7, the Allentown city council unanimously passed a bill to place a mayoral two-term limit on the ballot. Mayor Ed Pawlowski then vetoed the bill, but the council has overridden the veto. In the words of the referendum, if voters pass it “no person shall be elected to the office of the mayor more than twice. The time served to fill in for the remainder of an unexpired term shall not be deemed a ‘term’ for the purposes of this limitation.” In a memo to the city council after his veto, the mayor wrote that although he is opposed to term limits, “if we are to consider term limits for one elected branch of government, we should consider them for all elected branches”; i.e., the voters should be asked to term-limit the city council members also.



## TEXAS

On May 4 the Texas legislature passed a resolution calling for a Convention of States to propose amendments about balancing the federal budget and term limits. SJR 2 “[applies] to the Congress of the United States to call a convention under Article V of the United States Constitution for the limited purpose of proposing one or more amendments to the constitution to impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, to limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and to limit the terms of office of federal officials and members of Congress.”

# **IN OUR OPINIONS**

## **Term Limits Are Supposed to Make the Ruling Class Uncomfortable**

“The only place in Colorado where term limits aren’t supported is ironically the one place where we need something to be done about it: under the gold dome at the State Capitol in Denver. [Early in May], the Colorado Senate defeated by a 25-10 margin a resolution that would have helped spark an amendment-writing convention to term limit Congress.

“Sponsors of the measure were looking to use Article V of our Constitution, once an afterthought in civics class, to bypass Washington and deliver term limits without needing Congress to approve....

“Special interests can’t stand it when pesky term limits butt in to sever their cozy ties with incumbents.

“The goal of the term limits movement is to cause discomfort among the ruling class in Washington, D.C. It’s clear to every American that politicians from both parties undergo a metamorphosis once elected. Rather than serve constituents, members become loyal to capitol-based donors who bundle big money for campaigns. When politicians can serve forever, re-election replaces public service as a congressman’s top priority.”

— **“Self-Serving Owen Hill Sinks Term Limits in CO,” Nick Tomboulides, U.S. Term Limits, May 1, 2017, [bit.ly/2rip0r9](http://bit.ly/2rip0r9)**

## **Offended by Career Politicians in Colorado**

“It’s the height of arrogance to think that there’s nobody else in my district that can represent that district in a citizen’s legislature. I’m offended at career politicians. I’m offended at those career politicians that do nothing but stay in Congress for 40 or 50 years. And I agree with you. We need term limits. We need people with new ideas to straighten out that cesspool of sharks in Washington DC that have ruined our country. I’ll be a Yes.”

— **“CO Sen. Sonnenberg: ‘I’m offended by career politicians,” Colorado State Senator Jerry Sonnenberg, U.S. Term Limits YouTube video, May 6, 2017, [bit.ly/2qMRbuT](http://bit.ly/2qMRbuT)**

## **One Bad Term Deserves Another**

“[Congressional term limits] would have served voters far better than allowing Congresswoman Corrine Brown to fleece Florida and the nation for nearly a quarter of a century: twelve terms in Congress. Brown lost the seat for a 13th two-year lease in last year’s August primary, but only after being indicted a month earlier on 24 felony counts of fraud and obstruction....

“U.S. Term Limits was quick to put it in perspective: ‘Term limits would deprive Congress members of the decades in Washington they need to build power and monetize their offices. It would restore a citizen legislature where people come to Washington for a short time before returning to live as private citizens.’ [See our article, “12-Term Congresswoman Convicted for Stealing from Charity,” at [bit.ly/2rw1sPT](http://bit.ly/2rw1sPT).]

“The group added that Rep. Corrine Brown unsurprisingly voted against a constitutional amendment to impose such limits....

“One term in Congress, followed by one term of equal duration in prison, would be better.

“Or just limit congressional terms and don’t create demand for prison openings. ‘I’m proposing a term-limit of six years for members of the House and twelve years for members of the Senate,’ President Trump urged during the campaign.

“Works for me.”

— **“Another Argument for Term Limits...Convicted,” Paul Jacob, Townhall, May 14, 2017, [bit.ly/2rvlHgd](http://bit.ly/2rvlHgd)**

## **“You Never Know Where it Ends”**

“I’m a very strong proponent of term-limits, and I understand the converse argument...but I took this job knowing that I’d have eight years to work on the council, and I planned out my eight years — God willing another two more [years] to make my eight,’ [Utica councilman Joe Marino] said.

“I have no intention irrespective of what happens with that petition that they’ve got floating around to [seek another term on the council beyond eight years].’ He also said he’d never be in favor of an extension of term limits, ‘because you never know where it ends.’”

— **“Utica Councilman on Extending Term-Limits, Downtown Hospital Project,” Jeff Monaski, WIBX950, May 9, 2017, [bit.ly/2rw71xC](http://bit.ly/2rw71xC)**



# Chuck Woolery's Serious New Game: Congressional Term Limits

"I think, personally, that Washington really needs to be afraid of us. Deathly afraid of the people," says Chuck Woolery.

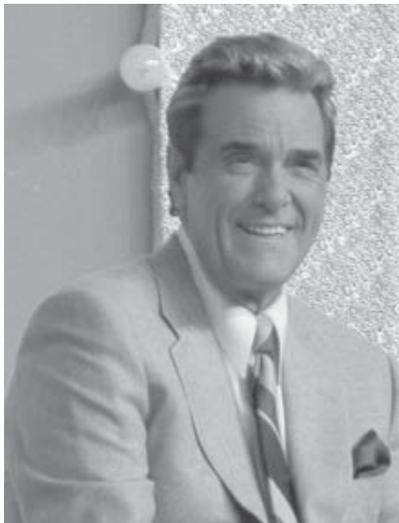
This was the mild sentiment which the singer, actor, and game show host — known to millions for his tenures on "Wheel of Fortune" (1975-1981) and "Love Connection" (1983-1994), among others — expressed several years ago to Mike Huckabee. The interview was the occasion of Woolery's formal coming out as a political conservative. He predicted that Hollywood would never hire him again now that his political views were out in the open.

That depends on how one defines "Hollywood." Chuck Woolery no doubt has the clout to do a game-show deal with Netflix or some other alternative to legacy media if he really wants to. But these days he focuses on promoting his political values, including the value of term limits as a means of subordinating officeholders to the people they are supposed to be representing. He spreads the word in interviews, humorous videos, and his podcast Blunt Force Truth.

A few years ago, Woolery worked with U.S. Term Limits to stop a deceptively worded California ballot measure to weaken state legislative term limits. In one of the many videos he has produced, he describes the politicians' strategy: "If you can't get the people to vote the way you want, deceive them; lie to them" ([bit.ly/2sAukqo](http://bit.ly/2sAukqo)). Unfortunately, the deception succeeded with at least some of the voters, and the ballot measure squeaked through.

In Woolery's Blunt Force Truth interview with Phil Blumel last year ([bit.ly/2sSrJrX](http://bit.ly/2sSrJrX)), the discussion was about the viability of convening an Article V Term Limits Convention so that a congressional term limits amendment could be sent to the states for ratification without the cooperation of Congress.

Lack of term limits is "how these guys get so thoroughly entrenched," Woolery said, "with not only raising their salary but raising their profile, and just staying in office forever. I mean, Strom Thurmond, I don't think he could talk by the time he was through in the Senate... How do we get



this? Do we literally have to go through an Article V convention of states to do it?"

"That's the conclusion we've come to," Phil told him. "The Article V convention approach has not been successfully done before in completion.... My [own] concerns about it evaporated upon inspection. We also could trace a path by which we could successfully term-limit the U.S. Congress via an Article V convention."

Woolery said that, like others, he too had at first been wary of the Article V convention method of amending the Constitution. But now his concern is how to dispel the fears of those who are still worried about the prospect of a so-called "runaway convention." Phil stressed the fact that the convention can be called only for the purpose of drafting a proposed amendment or amendments to send to the states. Then it would be up to the states to approve or disapprove. No renegade convention could enact any amendment to the U.S. Constitution on its own.

"If there's any problem with Article V, it's that it's too hard, not that it's too easy," Phil said. Thirty-eight states would then have to go on to ratify it, and congressional term limits is one of the few constitutional reforms that enjoys overwhelming bipartisan support.

Phil also stressed the fact that once the number of states who had called for a Term Limits Convention reached a tipping point, Congress would be under enormous pressure to preempt an Article V Convention by sending a term limits amendment to the states themselves.

We do have a bone to pick with Chuck Woolery. He should be more optimistic than he sometimes sounds about the chances of imposing congressional term limits. Indeed, he once went so far as to suggest that maybe he should "change my name to Chuck Quixote Woolery, because I know that [trying to get term limits on Congress] is like fighting windmills."

But Don Quixote thought he was fighting giants when he was really only tilting at windmills. No one shared his perception. Quixote was trying to fight a nonexistent enemy.

Of course, most political incumbents are no giants either. But they're real enough. And most Americans do understand the problems attending endless incumbency and the need for term limits to combat it. When they have a chance to enact term limits, they do. Chuck Woolery is helping them get the chance to enact term limits on the U.S. Congress.



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The Newsletter of the Term Limits Movement

A Publication of the U.S. Term Limits Foundation

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Washington, DC 20036

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**“Washington really needs to be afraid of us.  
Deathly afraid of the people.”**

**— game show host Chuck Woolery  
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