

# No Uncertain Terms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TERM LIMITS MOVEMENT • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER • VOLUME 27 • No. 5

## Stunning Success for USTL Voter Education Campaign as Ten of Ten Candidates Pledging Support for Term Limits Convention Win State Legislative Runoffs in Mississippi

U.S. Term Limits has taken advantage of Mississippi's off-year elections to tell voters about the willingness or unwillingness of candidates for the state legislature to pledge support for congressional term limits.

Ten candidates who had signed our Term Limits Convention Pledge were in the runoff elections for state representative or state senator held on Tuesday, August 27. All ten Pledge signers won their contests, and four incumbents were defeated.

In the weeks leading up to the runoff, many of the anti-term-limits politicians and their allies had gotten upset about USTL's effort to let voters know which of the candidates supported term limits to the extent of signing a formal pledge. On Episode 54 of the No Uncertain Terms Podcast, USTL Ex-

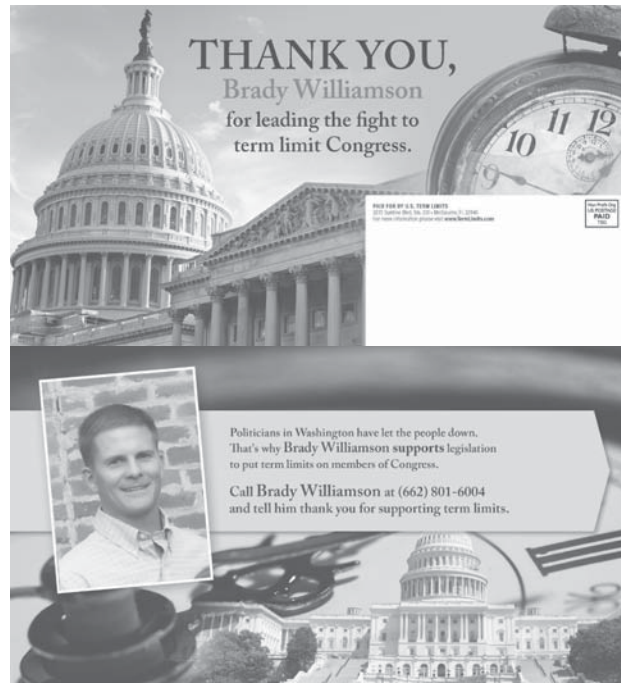
ecutive Director Nick Tomboulides discussed one example, a Facebook post published by the wife of a now-outgoing state representative, Roun McNeal.

McNeal had refused to sign the U.S. Term Limits Convention Pledge, which commits the signer as a state lawmaker to "consponsor, vote for, and defend the resolution applying for an Article V convention for the sole purpose of enacting term limits on Congress."

"It's one thing to lose an election over a belief you truly hold, but to potentially lose over something that is a complete and total lie is just sad," wrote Mrs. McNeal in her post. "He supports term limits. The mail and the ad are lies."

What did the mailer say? That Roun McNeal had refused to sign the Term Limits Pledge.

(Continued on Page 3)



## Presidential Candidates Joe Biden versus Tom Steyer on Congressional Term Limits

In our last issue, we reviewed the opinions about congressional term limits voiced by Democratic presidential candidates, often in response to on-the-spot queries by USTL Northern Regional Director Ken Quinn.

Ken is still asking the candidates for their views. And there's good news and bad news.

Joe Biden. First the bad news. A major candidate who you suspected would not offer a very positive or cogent response

when asked about congressional term limits has fulfilled this expectation.

Early in September, former Vice President Joe Biden, leading contender for the Democratic nomination, told Ken at a town hall in New Hampshire that he opposes congressional term limits because it would presumably have a destructive effect on the chances of small states to "get something done" by way of seniority. Seniority would, of course, become much less important in term-limited Congress. It's not just that Biden is

(Continued on Page 7)

**Has Trump turned against term limits?** p.2



# President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

It is not an impeachable offense, but President Donald Trump really should not have come out in favor of ending term limits on Republican committee chairman.

Yet this is what the president called for in one Twitter missive: "House Republicans should allow chairs of committees to remain for longer than six years. It forces great people and great leaders to leave after serving. The Dems have unlimited terms, and while that has its own problems, it's a better way to go. Fewer people in the end will leave."

Um, no, Mr. President. You are looking at this the wrong way.

Back in the 1990s, when a GOP-dominated Congress failed to give us the congressional term limits on all members that they had promised to fight for in the Contract With America, what the U.S. House gave us instead, as a concession to the popularity of term limits, was term limits on committee chairmen. Because of these term limits, GOP members have a lot more upward mobility than Democratic members. Many Republicans and Democrats who aspire to senior leadership positions are keenly aware of this fact.

Donald Trump should review his own Contract With the American Voter, issued just before the 2016 presidential election (see a PDF of the document at [wapo.st/2nFq212](http://wapo.st/2nFq212)). The first item listed in his 100-day action plan was to "propose a Constitutional Amendment to impose term limits on all members of Congress." At that time, Candidate Trump backed the U.S. Term Limits formula for congressional term limits of two six-year terms maximum in the U.S. Senate and three two-year terms maximum in the U.S. House.

This is the right idea. We need to supplement the GOP's committee chair term limits, not extinguish a too-limited expression of the term limits principle.

Let's tell Mr. Trump how we feel about this. Send President Trump a quick message objecting to his current position on term limits for committee chairs by visiting the Current Actions menu tab of the USTL web site. Or just go straight to [termlimits.com/trump](http://termlimits.com/trump). Let's tell the president that we support his original idea of imposing congressional term limits and that we are disappointed by this new call to dispense with the few term limits in Congress that we do have.



**Listen to Philip Blumel and Nick Tomboulides every week on the No Uncertain Terms podcast ([termlimits.com/podcast](http://termlimits.com/podcast)). Visit our Facebook page at [on.fb.me/U0blkG](https://on.fb.me/U0blkG). Visit [termlimits.com/petition](http://termlimits.com/petition) to sign up for email updates about U.S. Term Limits.**

## SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

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*

## Mississippi Winners (Cont'd from page 1)

ignoring the seniority problem but that “he’s applauding it,” comments USTL Executive Director Nick Tomboulides. “He’s saying, like, this is a good thing. We shouldn’t lift a finger to try to fix it. Well, why the hell not?”

Biden also stated that he had no problem with term limits on the presidency, since the president has “so much power” that he could abuse to stay in office. Might congressmen abuse their power? “No, because there’s so many of them.” (Blithely ignoring all corruption scandals, the multi-trillion-dollar debt, etc.) Biden’s comments are parsed in more detail in Episode 57 of the No Uncertain Terms podcast, the episode for the week of September 16, 2019. Visit [termlimits.com/podcast](http://termlimits.com/podcast).

Tom Steyer. The good news is Tom Steyer. After entering the presidential race this summer, the billionaire hedge fund manager quickly made clear that congressional term limits would be a top issue in his campaign.

As he said in an early campaign commercial: “Congress is broken. We need to make sure our representatives put the interests of their own constituents ahead of the lobbyists and

corporations. That’s why I’m proposing congressional term limits of 12 total years in the house and senate. This change will allow elected officials to focus on doing what’s right instead of what they need to do to get reelected. It will create a legislature that reflects the people, not corporations. Term limits will also infuse Congress with fresh ideas and a new, more diverse leadership.”

“With the exception of [the term limits proposed by] Donald Trump and Bill Weld, a 12-year overall term limit is the strongest we’ve heard proposed yet by any presidential candidate,” says USTL Executive Director Nick Tomboulides. “Certainly it’s the strongest we’ve heard on the Democratic side.”

*Visit [termlimits.com/2020-presidential-candidates-on-term-limits](http://termlimits.com/2020-presidential-candidates-on-term-limits) for links to videos in which Democratic presidential candidates express their views on term limits, including YouTube videos produced by U.S. Term Limits ([bit.ly/32BSMid](http://bit.ly/32BSMid)).*

### The Pledge Count

AS WE GO TO PRESS, THE FOLLOWING TOTAL NUMBERS OF OFFICEHOLDERS AND CANDIDATES HAVE SIGNED A U.S. TERM LIMITS PLEDGE TO SUPPORT CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS.

**69** CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS HAVE SIGNED OUR CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS PLEDGE “AS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS...TO COSPONSOR AND SUPPORT THE U.S. TERM LIMITS AMENDMENT OF THREE (3) HOUSE TERMS AND TWO (2) SENATE TERMS AND NO LONGER LIMIT.”

**84** CURRENT CANDIDATES FOR CONGRESS WHO ARE NOT ALSO INCUMBENTS IN CONGRESS HAVE SIGNED THE SAME PLEDGE.

**237** MEMBERS OF STATE LEGISLATURES HAVE SIGNED OUR TERM LIMITS CONVENTION PLEDGE TO “COSPONSOR, VOTE FOR, AND DEFEND THE RESOLUTION APPLYING FOR AN ARTICLE V CONVENTION FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF ENACTING TERM LIMITS ON CONGRESS.”

**136** CURRENT CANDIDATES FOR STATE LEGISLATURES WHO ARE NOT ALSO INCUMBENTS IN A STATE LEGISLATURE HAVE SIGNED THE SAME PLEDGE.

# Term Limits

## ARIZONA

Jim Olivi has joined U.S. Term Limits as our Arizona State Director. Jim, who has a background as a computer programmer and networking engineer, will be managing the effort to help secure passage of the application for an Article V Term Limits Convention in the Arizona legislature. Although a Term Limits Convention resolution has passed Arizona house two years in a row, it has yet to make it to the floor of the state senate. “I joined U.S. Term Limits because corrupt politicians will not reform themselves,” Jim says. “As Arizona director, I can help bring our state to the table at an Article V convention, which is the best way to propose a term limits amendment.”

## COLORADO

*Boulder, CO.* A measure to weaken term limits on the county coroner (from three to five four-year terms) will be on the November ballot. Many are arguing that the position should be exempt from term limits because it is not a political position. On the other hand, many of the arguments against this term limit repeat the same clichés used against term limits for positions that are indisputably political. For example, former state lawmaker Matt Jones says: “In my mind, the best forms of term limits are called elections.”

*Iliff, CO.* Town trustees have referred a measure to repeal term limits on town trustees on the November ballot. Mayor Caroline Jackson says: “People have to understand, if you’re term-limited and nobody steps forward to fill that seat, it goes empty. At least this way, the people who want to serve can continue to serve.”

## FLORIDA

Although a measure to limit the tenure of Florida school board members to a maximum of two four-year terms didn’t quite make it to ballot in the last session of the Florida legislature, the question will soon be revisited. A new bill (HR157) to send a constitutional amendment to the ballot has been filed by Representative Anthony Sabatini for consideration in the next regular session of the legislature, which convenes on January 14, 2020.

As an op-ed in the August 23 *Orlando Sentinel* by USTL Executive Director Nick Tomboulides defending Florida’s state legislative term limits suggests, voters will be no obstacle to enacting school board term limits if the question reaches the ballot box (“Florida voters are right to embrace term limits,” [bit.ly/31aenpR](https://bit.ly/31aenpR)). “The people of Florida fundamentally get it. We don’t want to return to a time before term limits when career politicians ran the show. We don’t want to return to a time when incumbents were unbeatable and over half our elections would get canceled due to lack of competition. We don’t want our state to be more like Illinois and Congress.”

## ILLINOIS

In mid-July of this year (2019), Illinois Governor Jay Pritzker signed legislation retroactively prohibiting retroactive local term limits, killing any such laws enacted in November 2016 and later. Although it is being challenged on constitutional grounds, the ban may mean that some local politicians who had been termed out or who had been about to be termed out of office can immediately run again. The state-level push to kill retroactive local term limits may have originated with a the Calamut City alderman’s challenge of a local term limit. Illinois’s assault on local term limits is the mirror image of what happened this year in Arizona. In the May-June issue of this newsletter, we reported that Arizona Governor Doug Ducey had “signed into law a bill that makes crystal-clear that citizen-enacted local term limits are fully enforceable in every Arizona town in which they have been enacted.”

Of course, what is happening in Illinois is not a weird deviation from the norm for state lawmakers, most of whom are hostile to term limits at all levels of government. In calling for state legislative term limits, former State Representative Katie Miller told *North Cook News*: “Politicians in Illinois feel that they are entitled to take kickbacks. Our politicians think that they are above the law. They believe that they can do whatever they want once they are elected. We have too many people who have spent their careers in politics. We need term limits.”

*Elk Grove, IL.* Mayor Craig Johnson is fighting to prevent a term limits measure from reaching the March 2020 primary ballot. If passed, the measure would retroactively limit the mayor and village trustees to two consecutive four-year terms. Enough petition signatures have been gathered to post the question, but it has not yet been certified for ballot. The mayor has transferred \$20,000 of his own campaign funds to a “Committee to Oppose the Retroactive Term Limits Referendum.” The referendum may be blocked anyway as a result of the new ban on local retroactive term limits that has just been signed by Illinois’s governor — unless this ban is ruled to be unconstitutional.



# In The News

## KENTUCKY

Gubernatorial candidate Andy Beshear has proposed state legislative term limits of eight years for both chambers, four consecutive two-year terms for state representatives and two four-year terms for state senators. A Republican Party spokesman, Mike Lonergan, says Beshear is not a credible reformer: “Kentuckians can’t trust a word Andy Beshear says. If he wants real ethics reform, he should start with his own office.” (An aide of Beshear has been jailed for bribery.) This is an ad hominem attack. A specific reform is justified or unjustified on the basis of its actual merit, regardless of who advocates it. In any case, we suspect that a great many persons in Kentucky with spotless reputations also support term limits. Send a term limits question to the ballot and let’s see.

## NEW YORK

*Ulster County, NY.* In August, Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan signed legislation to term limit the executive and comptroller to three four-year terms and legislators to six two-year terms. Legislator Joseph Maloney says, “Term limits protect the people from career politicians who concern themselves only with their next election.” Ryan says, “In passing and signing this law we are recognizing that we have to constantly reinvigorate our democracy. No elected office should ever belong to an individual. It must always remain in the hands of the people.”

The legislators had originally tried to send a referendum on term limits to the voters. But they encountered objections from the former county executive, Mike Hein, and others who claimed that state law prohibited holding a referendum on term limits. Although the legislators at first simply overrode Hein’s veto, they later decided to circumvent legal questions about the legality of a referendum by imposing the term limits directly.

## UTAH

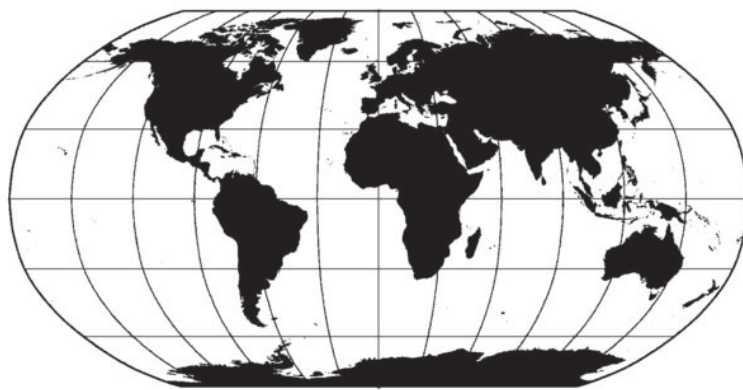
The United Utah Party is pursuing a ballot initiative to limit state lawmakers to three consecutive four-year terms. According to party chairman Richard Davis, “The goal is to restore the ideal of citizen service and discourage career politicians. What we are proposing is a reasonable term limit that still allows elected officials to serve long enough to make a difference, but not so long their career becomes more important than their constituents.” The web site [unite4termlimits.org/](http://unite4termlimits.org/) has a page where volunteers can sign up.

A recent Y2 Analytics poll of Utahns showed that 75% of respondents support term limits and only 7% agree with the notion that term limits are “a bad idea that put inexperienced people in office and prevent voters from reelecting capable legislators.” In 1994, Utah lawmakers passed a term limits to preempt a stronger term limits law being promulgated by citizen initiative. But in true career-politician fashion, the lawmakers repealed the term limits in 2003 before the limits could take effect.

## GUINEA

President Alpha Condé is working to flout Guinea’s constitution in order to run for a third term in office. A lengthy report at [africacenter.com](http://africacenter.com) concludes that doing so would be a dispiriting setback in a region that has been making democratic progress: “West Africa has a strong historical record of enforcing term limits and discouraging leaders from changing their country’s constitutions,” writes Alix Boucher. “This has had a positive impact on stability in the region. Of the 18 countries in Africa without term limits, a third suffer from armed conflict. In contrast, just two of the 21 countries with term limits are

in conflict. Condé’s continued attempts to remain in power, thus, increase the prospects of conflict in Guinea. They also pose a challenge to the region’s hard-earned norm of respecting term limits.... Given Guinea’s long and dark legacy of authoritarianism, the drafters of the current constitution took careful steps to avoid precisely this form of political maneuvering. The 2010 Constitution (Article 27) explicitly states that ‘the duration of the president’s term is five years, renewable once. In no circumstances can a person serve more than two terms, consecutive or not.’” (see [bit.ly/2nMj764](http://bit.ly/2nMj764)).



# The 2019 Scammy Awards for Corrupt Politicians

Let it not be said that U.S. Term Limits fails to appreciate the most outrageously brazen and corrupt career politicians. On the first anniversary of the No Uncertain Terms podcast this August, therefore, we made a special point of acknowledging the worst of the worst with our first annual Scammy Awards.

As you can imagine, the competition was very stiff indeed for the Scammy for Best Performance in Screwing Over the Voters. The nominees included the Arkansas state legislature for foisting an extremely misleading “ethics” question on the 2014 state ballot that covertly weakened state legislative term limits so that lawmakers could serve up to 16 years (or even more) in one seat; the Penelliss County, Florida commission for refusing to abide by term limits enacted by voters and ruled to be constitutional by the Florida Supreme Court; and the city council of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, for its own extremely persistent antagonism toward voter-enacted term limits. The winner of this award is the Penelliss County commission for its slithering effrontery in ignoring the law.

The Scammy for Best Actor was reserved for the politician “with the worst excuse for breaking his or her term limits pledge.”

The nominees included Congressman Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, who said that he and his wife

“decided to break the pledge after consulting with each other and God”; Arkansas State Senator Garry Stubblefield, who voted to drastically weaken term limits, but then said he didn’t remember the vote and had just sort of stumbled into opposition (“I’m not sure I was in the room when that vote was taken”); U.S. Senator Susan Collins of Maine, now on her fifth term after having pledged in 1996 to serve only two terms; and Arizona State Representative Diego Rodriguez, who had pledged in 2018 to “support and vote for the resolution applying for an Article V convention for the limited purpose of enacting term limits on Congress” but ended up voting against the convention when it came up for a vote.

This was another brutally competitive category. But we had to bestow the award upon Congressman Markwayne Mullin, who broke his own three-term self-limit pledge as well as the U.S. Term Limits Amendment Pledge. The double-renegeing gave Mullin the edge over those who had flagrantly reneged on only a single term limits pledge.

Nominees for the Scammy for Most Corrupt Politician (or Orange Jumpsuit Scammy) went to Congresswoman Corrine Brown, a 24-year incumbent now in prison for stealing from a fake charity she had concocted; Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a 34-year incumbent, for using taxpayer money to pay off sexual harassment suits against members of Congress; Congressman Duncan Hunter, a 10-year incumbent who embezzled \$250,000 in campaign funds for sundry lavish personal expenses; and Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a 29-year incumbent who has been constantly funneling campaign and government funds to family members.

And the winner is...Mitch McConnell.

You’ll find a much fuller discussion of how we arrived at the nominations and the winners in the No Uncertain Terms Podcast for the week of August 12, 2019, Episode 52. Visit [termlimits.com/podcast](http://termlimits.com/podcast).

Learn more about being a term limits volunteer by joining the U.S. Term Limits National Conference Call, organized by Ken Quinn. Visit [www.termlimits.com/volunteerwebinar](http://www.termlimits.com/volunteerwebinar) to register.

**NO** Uncertain **TERMS!**

The Podcast of the Term Limits Movement

SPECIAL ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY Episode 52

Who will win the Scammy for the most corrupt politician in America?

2019 Scammy Award

[termiimits.com/podcast](http://termiimits.com/podcast)

U.S. TERM LIMITS

## Biden v. Steyer (Cont'd from page 1)

“We didn’t just send it to him,” recalled U.S. Term Limits Executive Director Nick Tomboulides. “We followed up. We had conversations with him. Roun McNeal just would not sign the Pledge. His opponent signed the Pledge.”

USTL President Philip Blumel added that politicians “always want to seem like they support term limits, because they know 80% of their audiences — or more — support this. So

they need to sort of walk a tightrope here. But we know full well that if they will not sign a pledge or do something in support of term limits prior to an election, after the election they are hopeless.”

The ire from establishment candidates and their allies was one clue that our Mississippi campaign was working, that voters were getting the message about who was willing to sign on the dotted line in support of term limits and who was refusing to do so. Another clue was the results on August 28.

“In four of those races, the non-pledge-signer was an incumbent,” Nick stressed after the results were in. “All of the pledge-signing candidates won and all of the pledge-refusing candidates lost.”

One of the victorious signers was Brady Williamson (the subject of the mailer shown on the front page). Williamson, a Republican, will be facing Democrat Bobby Dailey and Independent Josh Hawkins in the November 5, 2019 general election.



Joe Biden and Tom Steyer have different views on congressional term limits.

Other runoff winners were Pledge signers Romona Blackledge, Kathy Chism, Kegan Coleman, Andre DeBerry, Jeremy England, Dale Goodwin, Michael McLendon, Jansen Owen, and Melanie Sojourner.

Incumbents who lost in the runoffs were State Senator Chris Massey and State Representatives John Corley, Roun McNeal, and Gary Staples.

“U.S. Term Limits did mailers in all eight races, as well as powerful digital ads that showcased the differences between the candidates,”

Nick reported. “The digital ads reached every voter in a vast majority of targeted districts. That is how voters made the connection. And it’s a test for what’s to come nationally. If guys are losing their seats on this issue, they will hopefully get behind the Term Limits Convention and we will be able to build some momentum.”

Some of the races were close — for example, Jeremy England won his runoff by just 40 or so votes—suggesting that voter support for term limits along with their USTL-facilitated knowledge of the differences between the candidates on term limits — helped pro-term-limit candidates to cross the finish line.

“We are proud of our effort to show voters who does and does not support term limits,” Nick said. “We look forward to doing more in the future until the congressional term limits resolution passes in Mississippi.”

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## Congressman Drew Ferguson Versus His Term Limits Pledge

“Term limits for Congress is the most popular and bipartisan issue in America. It has support from 82% of voters, including 89% of Republicans, 76% of Democrats and 83% of independent voters. That’s why, when he was running for Congress 2016, Drew Ferguson signed a pledge promising to co-sponsor and vote for a specific term limits amendment: three House terms and two Senate terms. President Donald Trump has endorsed this same amendment.

“Now that Ferguson has become a powerful incumbent, however, he refuses to keep his word. He refuses to sponsor House Joint Resolution 20 for term limits, despite having pledged his support in writing. My group, U.S. Term Limits, has reached out to Ferguson repeatedly and reminded him of his commitment. We’ve made no progress. Ferguson seems more determined to side with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell than with his own constituents....

“If you talk to Congressman Ferguson, please ask him to reconsider breaking his promise on term limits. The people of district three deserve much better. They deserve a leader who keeps his word.”

— “Ferguson Needs to Keep His Promise,” letter to the editor, Nick Tomboulides, *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, August 25, 2019, bit.ly/318T9c1

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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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**“Donald Trump should review his own Contract With the American Voter, issued just before the 2016 presidential election. The first item listed in his 100-day action plan was to ‘propose a Constitutional Amendment to impose term limits on all members of Congress.’”**

— Philip Blumel  
see p. 2