

No Uncertain Terms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TERM LIMITS MOVEMENT

April 2000 • VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 4

Self-Limiters Make the Cut

The Club For Growth Endorses Four Self-Limiter Candidates

The Club For Growth, a non-profit political advocacy organization, recently endorsed a group of several congressional candidates that included four self-limiters.

The Club's recommendations included Mark Nielsen (CT-5), Jeff Flake (AZ-1), Ric Keller (FL-8), and Charlie Gerow (PA-19), who have all signed the U.S. Term Limits Declaration.

"The Club for Growth is a membership organization of thousands of likeminded political contributors from across the country who are frustrated with the ideological drift of both parties today," the organization's mission state-

ment says. "All Club members have a shared goal of helping elect more Reaganite, economic growth-oriented office seekers."

Given this goal, it's no surprise that self-limiters made such a strong showing in the Club's endorsements. Over and over, self-limited members of Congress have demonstrated an overwhelming tendency to fight for more responsible government in

every regard. Their self-limiting pledges give them the freedom to stand up to established special interests and hold government account-



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Popular Support

America Overwhelmingly Supports Term Limits

Americans favor term limits almost three to one, according to a nationwide poll conducted in January by the nationally reknowned polling firm John McLaughlin & Associates. The poll results show that 68.8% of voters favor placing term limits on members of

Congress.

The poll also found that 59.1% of voters would be more likely to support a congressional candidate who favored term limits and pledged to serve no more than three terms.

The poll interviewed 1000 likely voters, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. ■

Message from the National Director

“Without a Vision”

Close your eyes for 3 seconds — not if you're on the road right now though — and imagine what you would do if you were in the Congress. Fight for new legislation? Repeal misguided old statutes? Block pork-barrel spending? Combat corruption?

Our dreams shape our horizons; they're an inspiration and a challenge to do our best. That “vision-thing” is important. If we don't envision it, we don't attempt it. Now, I don't want to start preaching, but the Bible itself says, “Without a vision, my people perish.”

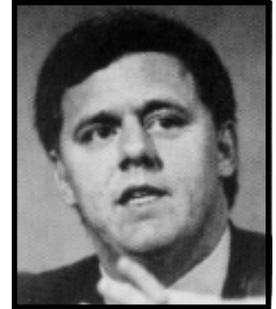
Take Senator Trent Lott from Mississippi. He leads the Republican majority in the U.S. Senate. Asked by reporters what he hoped to accomplish this year, Lott replied: “We don't have to score a touchdown, we just have to control the clock.”

Huh? Republicans have the ball, and they ain't exactly winning out there on the field, and all they want to do is run out the clock? Lott and those like him would rather stay in Washington twiddling their

thumbs than take a political risk to advance the issues they claim to care about.

Commentator Robert Novak says, “They lack courage because they are professional politicians. They are much more worried about the next election, about keeping their majority, about keeping their seats, than they are about having the courage do the right thing.” Good point.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to win elections. But to junk your agenda simply to hold on to power? Power to do what? ■



Four Self-Limiters Endorsed by Club

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able for its misuse of power.

Nielsen is an attorney in a Danbury, Connecticut, law firm and has served as a Connecticut state senator, where he has opposed wasteful spending and fought to impose strong structural limitations on government growth.

Flake, in addition to an

endorsement by the Club, also has the approval of Rep. Matt Salmon (R-AZ), the self-limiter whose open seat Flake hopes to fill.

“I can think of no one who is better prepared to make a real difference in Washington than Jeff Flake,” commented citizen legislator Salmon at a press conference last September, adding that he believed Flake would continue to “rock the boat.”

Keller's home state of Florida has a strong term limits record, which he hopes to become a part of. A full-page profile of him can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

Gerow, also an attorney, has spent several years as Pennsylvania state Chairman of Citizens Against Government Waste, and was the second recipient of the “Career Award” issued by Citizens Against Higher Taxes. ■

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Term Limits Bring Wholesale Change Into Legislatures

by Francis X. Clines, *The New York Times*

As term limits gradually take effect in 18 state legislatures across the country, the time strictures so popular with voters are turning seasoned leaders from office, nipping political careers and prompting unusual party maneuvers.

A new sort of fast-forward politicking spawned by term limits is exemplified here in Ohio, where the majority Republican leadership is trying to name three statehouse speakers to serve over the next three years before term limits take effect with this November's elections.

Such fleeting leadership is a far cry from fabled legislative bosses like the late Speaker Vern Riffe, who fiercely wielded the Ohio gavel for two decades. But it is one of the new laws of compressed politicking being forged under term limits, in which the affected states have initially been seeing a third or more of their incumbents forced to depart.

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Similar wholesale disruptions of political life, with local and county politicians moving more quickly into the statehouse, have been taking place in the six states that have instituted term limits since 1996. Five more, led by Ohio and Florida, are introducing limits this year, while another seven are to have them in effect by 2007.

California, a pioneer in term limits, saw its statehouse leadership initially decimated, but proponents emphasize that a younger and more diverse crop of lawmakers took office there. One out of four legislators in Sacramento is now a woman, up from 17

percent a decade ago, and Hispanics hold 19 percent of the seats, up from 6 percent.

Comparable changes in representation are hoped for by proponents here and in Florida, where substantial legislative turnover is also approaching. The first year of term limits in Florida will find 55 of the 120 members of the lower house and 11 of 40 state senators displaced in the November elections. "It's going to bring about better government," Gov. Jeb Bush predicts.

The intricate musical-chair leadership deal being tried in Ohio is denounced as back-room desperation by the Democratic minority. But it is defended by Republicans as the only recourse for heading off a state of constant caucus infighting because of the large-scale turnover dictated by the eight-year term limit (four two-year terms in the House, two four-year terms in the Senate) that is about to begin. The Republicans are trying to project two future speakers even though they cannot be sure future voters will retain the Republican majority needed to guarantee the tricky deal.

In the first year, the new limits mean that 43 members of the 99-member Ohio House elected in 1998, plus 6 of the 33 sitting senators, cannot run again. The wrenching effect, similar to that experienced in other statehouses with term limits, begins with the traditional leadership posts where seniority has long been a dominant factor.

"I'm onto my third finance committee chairman in the last year," said the current speaker, Jo Ann Davidson, amazed at how fast this traditionally powerful plum of a job has been turning over. Qualified lawmakers, doomed by their long experience, have been resigning early over the past year to find fresh career opportunities. As a practical matter, the

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eight-year maximum is already amounting to something less than seven years.

Just a few years ago, term limits proved popular with the public, getting better than 70 percent approval in some states where they were enacted through referendums. Now, even as the public push for limits is appearing to wane, there is evidence that threatened legislators are having second thoughts.

Bills to repeal or liberalize term limits were submitted last year in 7 of the 18 states that have adopted them, said Jennie Drage of the National Conference of State Legislatures. None have thus far passed. Meanwhile, statehouse leaders are trying to adapt to the new climate by assigning newcomers to intensive training in mock debates and committee apprenticeships.

Evidence of the rapidly altered politics of term limits abounds, whatever the ultimate judgment proves to be about the quality of lawmaking in the term-limited states.

In Florida, four members of the Jacksonville City Council quickly announced for open statehouse seats, exemplifying the greatly accelerated career paths of politics in states with term limits. In Ohio's Hamilton County, four seats rated safely Republican instantly drew 50 candidates. The opportunity for newcomers presented by term limits has made the primary slate here next month the most crowded in 20 years, with 56 House and 16 Senate nominations still to be settled.

"It's something of a Big Bang," Richard Vedder, a political analyst at Ohio University in Athens, said. "People have underestimated the political impact this is going to have as newcomers try to move

through uncharted territory."

Visiting lawmakers from Michigan, where term limits went into effect last year, cautioned their Ohio colleagues to expect such phenomena as a much more highly compressed style of ambition.

"Freshmen must literally make their move for the speakership by the end of their first term," said the Ohio House minority leader, Jack Ford, a Democrat.

"We decry the speakers deal," Mr. Ford said, contending that

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lobbyists had a hand in concocting it. "It goes against representative democracy as the epitome of back-room arrogance. Imagine trying to decide the leadership before the lawmakers who have that responsibility have even been elected by the people."

But Speaker Davidson said the deal, uncertain as it may be, is the best way to salvage some needed continuity and avoid perennial caucus battles. Her designated successors agree.

"Term limits presented Ohio with a struggle between the past and the fast-approaching future,"

said Representative Larry Householder, the assistant majority leader, who is slated to be the big winner in the announced tandem speakership. A freshman lawmaker only two years ago, Mr. Householder began an early and energetic campaign for the leadership. He sensed the term-limit train coming down the line and traveled the state with campaign signs as he went door to door to enlist statehouse Republicans.

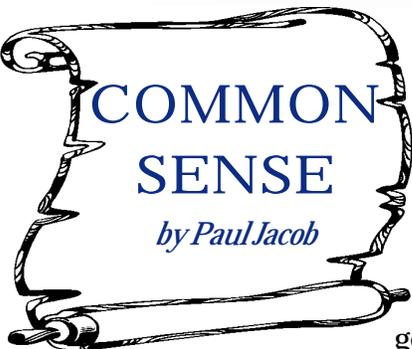
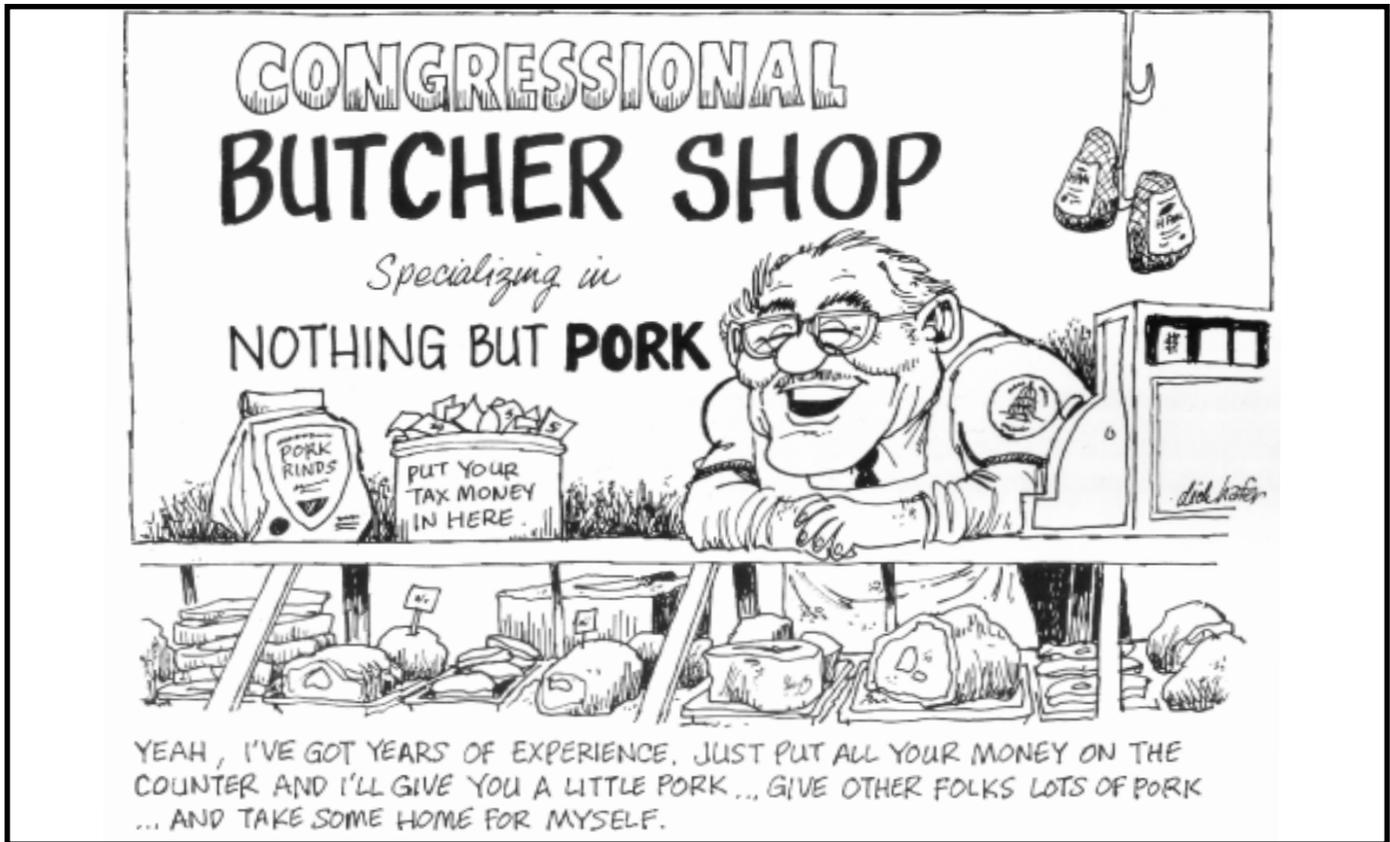
"I campaigned for it," said Mr. Householder, a 40-year-old insurance salesman who is supposed to share the gavel next year and hold it outright thereafter for the final three years of his legislative career, assuming he is re-elected during that time. His partner in the unusual arrangement will be Representative Bill Harris, a 65-year-old automobile dealer who is term-limited in 2002 and so, in the new ways fast-forward politics, wants to resign a year early to try for the state Senate.

"You can see the turmoil," said Mr. Harris, who favored term limits as a private citizen in 1992, when voters approved the idea and the focus was on limiting the terms of members of Congress. Since then, the United States Supreme Court has struck down limits in Congress but not in statehouses.

As a legislator, Mr. Harris has come to oppose limits as the need for critical experience in the legislature became clearer to him. His designated successor, Mr. Householder, is more optimistic that term limits can be made to work.

"I'm all for it right now," he said. "But I think in '04 when I'm term-limited I'll probably be scraping my nails across the desk as they drag me out." ■

Excerpted from *The New York Times*



The Weekly Radio Commentary of the U.S. Term Limits Foundation

“The Pros”

In football, it doesn't get any better than the NFL. That's what it means to be a pro. In politics, to be "a pro" means something very different.

Missouri State Sen. John Schneider has been in office for 30 years. He doesn't like the term limits that 75 percent of Missouri voters imposed on the legislature. With typical arrogance, Schneider has introduced legislation to water down limits so he can stay even longer.

Comparing legislators to professional football players, he said, "There's a whole lot of difference between the NFL quarterback who's a rookie and the NFL quarterback who's got some seasoning." Oh yeah? Missouri is home to the NFL world champion St. Louis Rams who were led this year by an unheralded rookie quarterback who grabbed most valuable player honors as well as MVP of the Super Bowl. More rookies please.

In California, Michigan, Colorado, Oregon, Arkansas, and Maine — where term limits have already gone into effect — the new "rookies" are doing just fine AND cleaning up messes left by the old pros.

Give us the amateurs. An amateur is someone who does something for the "love of it." If you aren't in public office because you love this country, if it's all about you and your benefits and your career, then get out.

Congressman Matt Salmon of Arizona is stepping down after six productive years as a citizen legislator. He puts it another way, "If the NBA operated like Congress, they would have a bunch of fat, old men shooting free throws." ■

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They Said It

Term Limits the Only Way

In the recent monthly publication of the Brown County Taxpayers Association, association President Frank Bennett said the 1999-2001 state budget contains hidden taxes and examples of taxpayer money being spent ‘without due process.’

“The budget process itself proved that term limits may be the only way that we can keep our government officials responsive to our needs,’ Bennet said.”

—*Green Bay Press-Gazette*

Shaking up Montana Politics

What makes the 2000 election different is this will be the first affected by the constitutional amendment Montanans adopted in 1992 that limits the terms of its elected state officials and lawmakers. In general, the law says an elected official cannot serve more than eight consecutive years at the same post.

“As a result, none of these top officials can run again for the same job in 2000.”

—*Billings Gazette*

“The seed Ohioans planted by approving term limits in 1992 began to bear fruit yesterday. . . . [V]irtually everywhere: fresh new faces on the political scene.”

—The Columbus Dispatch

It’s About Time!

The clock is ticking on Florida’s lawmakers, leaving some who have occupied the Statehouse for decades with just two more months to make a lasting impression.

“The state’s ‘Eight is Enough’ amendment that takes effect this year is forcing out nearly half of the House members and more than a quarter of the state senators.”

—*Associated Press*

Career Politicians: For the Birds

[Michigan activist Greg] Schmid said part-time legislatures have been effective in several other states and would work well in Michigan, especially combined with term limits.

“Once we see a term-limited Legislature with a part-time Legislature we’ll start seeing more important legislation passed instead of arguments over the state bird, he said.”

—*State News*
(East Lansing, Mich.)

Candidate Spotlight:

Ric Keller – Florida Congressional District 8

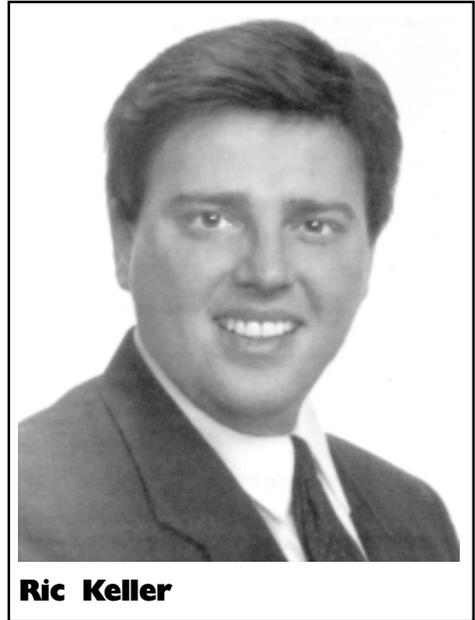
Term Limits Legacy

Florida is a great state for term limits. In 1992, its citizens passed term limits on its state legislators by a record 77 percent, and the state is home to congressional self-limiters Senator Connie Mack, Rep. Charles Canady, and Rep. Tillie Fowler.

Now Ric Keller, candidate for Florida's 8th Congressional District, plans to join the state's legacy of term limits. Keller, who is the only Republican candidate in the district to sign the U.S. Term Limits pledge to limit his own terms in office, is running for the open seat left by retiring Rep. Bill McCollum.

Keller's campaign focuses on reform, with

lower taxes, smaller government and less government spending as highlights of his platform. Based on the record of most other self-limiters in Congress, Keller has a good shot at making a real difference.



Ric Keller

“I am not a career politician. I have not sold my soul to the lobbyists and special interest groups. I don't want a career in politics. Rather, I want to go to Congress to do my best to represent you and then come back home.”

**– Ric Keller,
candidate for Florida's
8th Congressional
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“I am not a career politician,” Keller says. “I have not sold my soul to the lobbyists and special interest groups. I don't want a career in politics. Rather, I want to go to Congress to do my best to represent you and then come back home.”

Keller brings plenty of real-life experience to his campaign, the kind legislators need most. He lives in Orlando with his wife and two children, where he works as a partner in a law firm, specializing in defending doctors and corporations in medical malpractice and product liability suits. Among other community activities, he's served as chairman of the board for a high school mentoring program in Orlando and Orange County, and in 1996 he co-authored the Polluter Pays amendment to Florida's constitution, requiring polluters rather than taxpayers to foot the bill for Everglades cleanup. The amendment was passed by 68.1% of voters.

Making a difference in Washington today requires a strong commitment to remain independent of the corrupting influences that result when politics becomes a career. Taking the term limits pledge is a promising beginning. ■

Term limits create bevy of open seats

By Lee Leonard

The hunting season has opened for seats in the General Assembly, and, in the language of game wardens, the harvest is plentiful.

Because of term limits, more primary-election contests will be held for the House and Senate this year than at any time since 1982.

With numerous lawmakers ineligible to run because they have reached the maximum eight consecutive years in office, 39 districts have no incumbent running.

"The open seats have created more competition," said Rick Farmer of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics and an assistant political science professor at the University of Akron.

"I think it's almost exclusively a function of open seats," agreed House Speaker Pro Tempore Randall Gardner, R-Bowling Green.

More than one-third of the House members will be new a year from now. They will need a crash course in how the Statehouse works, and the pace of legislation might be slowed to accommodate them.

There are six primary contests in the Senate for the 16 seats at stake, compared with 56 contests involving 150 Republican and Democratic candidates for the 99 House seats.

Those numbers might diminish slightly as candidates drop out or are disqualified for insufficient signatures they filed Jan. 7 for the March 7 primary.

In 1982, the year after legislative districts were redrawn, the Senate had seven contested primaries with 22 candidates, while the House had 63 contests with 159 candidates.

The modern record for contested

primaries was set in 1966, when 96 candidates competed in 34 Senate primaries, and 307 candidates fought for party nominations in 96 House races. That was the first election in Ohio after legislative districts were redrawn to comply with a U.S. Supreme Court order that districts contain roughly equal populations.

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It forced state officials to carve out districts in cities where legislative candidates had run at large, and to combine some sparsely populated counties that had enjoyed their own representative.

Now, fresh candidates are jumping at the chance to run in districts where there is no incumbent with the advantages of name recognition and funding from Columbus lobbyists and party caucuses.

"Open seats are more winnable than when you have an incumbent," said Herbert Asher, a former political science professor at Ohio

State University. Asher said he thinks more campaign money might be spent on capturing open seats than in districts with entrenched incumbents.

Other states with term limits have experienced a similar proliferation of candidates, Farmer said.

Sixty-four of the 110 House members in Michigan, where term limits began in January 1999, are new this session. Only one of those new members did not have a primary contest in 1998.

Farmer said that after this year, the number of primary contests will diminish because most incumbents are not yet limited by terms, and about 20 percent of the seats will be open. For example, only 14 of the 110 Michigan House members have reached their term limits this year.

In Ohio, 49 of the 99 members elected in 1998 could not run in 2000 because they reached their maximum eight years of service. Twelve left for other jobs and one died, leaving 36 members limited by terms. In addition, two members who have not reached their maximum years of service are seeking other offices, and one did not seek re-election, creating 39 open House seats.

Districts will be redrawn for the 2002 elections to reflect population shifts in the 2000 census. The reapportionment will be controlled by Republicans, who have all three executive branch officials on the five-member Apportionment Board and one legislator. ■

Excerpted from the *Columbus Dispatch*