

## PUBLIC MANDATE

# Term Limits Are Here to Stay!

Even though the public seems split down the middle about who the next president should be, term limits received another clear public mandate at the ballots during the November election.

Nebraska has joined the 18 other states who have limited the terms of their state legislatures. You can read more about this exciting victory below.

In local news, measures were overwhelmingly passed in California, Florida, Maryland, and New Mexico limiting locally-elected officials. And wherever elected officials attempted to repeal term limits, voters rejected

their proposals in every instance. Read the final returns for these races on page 7.

Also, three new self-limiting members of Congress were elected, who will help replace the departing self-limiters who have served their country so well. Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Ric Keller (R-FL) and Tim Johnson (R-IL) join 36 other self-limiters already serving in Congress.

Paul Jacob, national director for U.S. Term Limits, responded to the election results saying, "Last night, voters all across America resoundingly showed their support for term limits." ■



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## INITIATIVE SUCCESS

### Victory in Nebraska!

Becoming the 19th state to approve term limits for state legislators, Nebraskans passed a measure that limits legislators to two consecutive terms in office. The measure, Initiative 415, passed 56-44 percent.

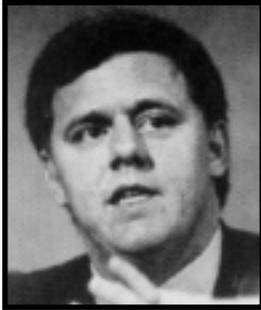
Guy Curtis, chairman of Nebraskans for Limited Terms, and Randy Ritnour, treasurer, were elated that their hard work had finally paid off. Even after they had turned in nearly 155,000 signatures to qualify the measure this past summer, members

of the legislature and their bought-off lobbyists vehemently opposed the activists' efforts through phone calls and radio advertisements.

"Finally, we'll have new people and new ideas in the legislature," Ritnour said of November's election results.

Term limits will dramatically change how the Nebraska legislature operates in the future. By 2008 when term limits take effect, there will be over a 90 percent turnover among legisla-

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## MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

# Oops in Arizona

Arizona Governor Jane Hull doesn't think the average voter is quite up to real decision-making. So she's pushing efforts to thwart citizen initiatives by doubling the number of petition signatures voters must collect to get a vote on an issue. Her view is simple: the legislature and the governor are pros who can do all this better than us.

Politicians are so smart that we just can't live without them. But then oops! . . . we get a little peek at their handiwork, and up in a puff of smoke goes that particular fatal conceit.

Governor Hull is blaming the legislature for one of the biggest, stupidest blunders SHE ever signed into law. See, these geniuses offered to pay — make the taxpayers pay — half the cost of a new car if the vehicle is rigged to run on both regular gas and propane or natural gas.

No requirement that the car use the alternative fuel. And Arizona taxpayers must also subsidize luxury items like leather seats and CD players.

So, the program costs a whopping \$420 million — a full seven percent of the state's budget — and is having zero impact on smog, according to environmentalists.

Don't worry, Governor Hull, help is on the way. Arizona's term limits law will now bring fresh faces and real world experience into state government — to replace that insufferable know-it-all attitude.

Term limits were brought by citizen initiative. Blowing over \$420 million was the work of experienced politicians, working overtime. ■

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tors.

Initiative 415 received endorsements from national and local watchdog organizations including Citizens Against Government Waste, National Taxpayers Union, Americans for Tax Reform and Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom.

We contragulate Guy Curtis, Randy Ritnour and other Nebraska supporters for their continued commitment to better government! ■

## 2000 Activist of the Year

This year's "Activist of the Year" award goes to Michael Fagan.

Mike lives with his wife Donna and three children in Spokane, WA, where he works as a purchasing agent for a manufacturing organization. As a volunteer, Mike co-chaired the Eastern Washington Term Limits Action Committee that most recently, spearheaded the campaign to keep Rep. George Nethercutt true to his word of serving only six years in Congress. Although

it is unfortunate that Rep. Nethercutt won re-election to a fourth term in office, Mike's undying dedication to term limits and hard work kept the issue in the forefront of Nethercutt's campaign, in Spokane and around the country.

Having traveled to every part of Washington's Fifth Congressional District, Mike successfully portrayed Nethercutt as the "Weasel" he is, literally. Last year, *Doonesbury* comic creator, Gary Trudeau, referred to the congressman as the Weasel

King. With Mike's help, the Weasel King came to life and followed Rep. Nethercutt around town. And when he wasn't dressed in the 6-foot costume, he was busy putting up yard signs, writing letters to the editor and picketing Nethercutt campaign events.

On behalf of freedom fighters across the county, we congratulate Mike Fagan on his continued support of limited government. Thank you Mike, for all you've done for the term limits movement! ■

### NO UNCERTAIN TERMS

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For the latest developments on term limits across America, visit our web site on the Internet at

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## Exit Interviews

by Michael W. Lynch and Katherine Mangu-Ward

*Reason*

October 2000

### House Doctor

**Rep. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.)**

"Most of them are egomaniacs," says Tom Coburn of his congressional colleagues. "There are not many normal people up here."

Coburn was quickly elected to represent Oklahoma's 2nd District in 1994 and quickly became a player in the annual budget process, working with other conservative members to limit spending. A medical doctor who has maintained his family care and obstetrics practice while in office, he has also made AIDS a top priority, authoring a bill that would require newborns to be tested for HIV if their mothers hadn't been tested for the virus.

Mindful of his declaration that normalcy is in short supply in Washington, it's worth pointing out that Coburn is convinced that there's a national epidemic of venereal disease (gonorrhea comes up quickly and easily even in casual conversation with the congressman). He gives his congressional colleagues and their staff an annual presentation on the subject, providing C-SPAN with some of its racier moments. That's no small accomplishment during the Clinton years.

Coburn doesn't think he'll miss Congress and Washington and has no plans for future political office. Instead, he'll return to his medical practice.

**Reason:** What prompted you to run for Congress?

**Tom Coburn:** I was nauseated at what I saw going on. I thought people other than politicians ought to get involved. And I believe in term limits. They set you free from both party and procedural guidelines to do what you think is right.

**Reason:** Is your voluntary leaving a loss or a gain?

**Coburn:** It's a gain. Hopefully, more people will see the wisdom of a short period of service up here. Why would you want to come up here to stay? Ask yourself that question. What is it that addicts someone to Washington?

Most people who want to do that have a deep-seated insecurity or they wouldn't be up here in the first place.

**Reason:** Have your priorities changed since you first showed up in D.C.?

**Away from Washington, the term-limits movement has been a huge success. Eighteen states have enacted term limits on their legislators; tellingly, all but two of the laws came about via ballot initiatives. This year alone, 380 state legislators will leave office due to term limits.**

**Coburn:** No. They include a marked decrease in the intrusion in our lives by the federal government at all levels. A restoration of liberty and freedom. I am 52 years old and I can tell you that you have less freedom compared to what I had. You can measure it and define it. There are not more than 160 people in the House who believe in limited government. They may say they believe in it, and that is the difference between a career politician and a term-limited one. The former will say whatever they need to get re-elected, but what you have to do is measure their votes. They'll vote exactly the other way.

**Reason:** You've been outspoken about trying to get Congress to stick to the 1997 spending caps.

**Coburn:** We are so far above the budget caps set in 1997. The agreement we have made with the president on controlling spending and

decreasing the size of government was a sham. He knew it and our leaders knew it. And they perpetrated a fraud on the American people.

We are just like second-century Rome and Greece. We are declining as a nation because our leadership and our government now use farce to state their cases, and there are too few people who are willing to stand up and challenge that, including the media. Consequently, the very tenets of our liberty are going to be taken away.

**Reason:** What are some of the perks of power?

**Coburn:** It's about being called "Congressman." C.S. Lewis had this concept called the "inner circle." Man is constantly trying to get into the inner circle and the reason you want to be on the inner circle is because there is notoriety in it, but also because you can elevate yourself above those that are outside the circle. This is the reason this is such a great job: There are only 435 in this inner

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circle, out of 270 million people. It is the ultimate inner circle. And then if you are a committee chairman, you are in the next inner circle. And then if you are in leadership, you are in the next inner circle. And then if you are in the conference committee in leadership, you are in the next inner circle. It is elitism, elitism, elitism — chasing something to elevate yourself.

**Reason:** What is the most absurd program you have come across in your time in Congress?

**Coburn:** There's tons. The advanced technology program. We subsidize major, multi-billion-dollar corporations in the country to advance their technology. Your tax dollars go to General Motors, IBM, Exxon-Mobil. It is ludicrous. And there's the sugar subsidy that elevates the price of your sugar.

**Reason:** Talk about your HIV/AIDS issues.

**Coburn:** I think history is going to show that this country was a miserable failure when it came to this disease. We have a million people walking around today with HIV. Had we handled it the proper way, the number would be about 50,000 or 60,000. The proper way would have been national testing, partner notification, and accountability. If you have HIV, you have the obligation to never give that to anybody. Just like if you have tuberculosis, you have an obligation to not give that to someone.

**Reason:** National HIV testing, a registry — actions like that have been taken in Cuba.

**Coburn:** The reason that such programs have been successful in Cuba is because of accountability. If indeed you do get HIV, you dare not give it to someone else. The spread of this disease would stop tomorrow if everybody that has HIV today didn't give it to anyone else. We need partner-notification and contact-tracing. Just like we've done with gonorrhea for 20 years in this country. We've never violated anybody's civil rights. We said, "You have this, you need to be treated. We need to know your partners so they can get treated and so that they won't give it to anyone."

**Reason:** What have you learned from your time in Congress?

**Coburn:** That six years is enough.

### **Another Kind of Salmon**

#### **Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.)**

Matt Salmon, the Republican representative from Arizona's 1st District, is a budget hawk who nonetheless supports huge government spending for space, science, and the Stealth Bomber. He's not a man big on second, third, or fourth chances, be they for child molesters or for speakers of the House.

He sponsored "Aimee's Law," also known as the No Second Chances for Murderers, Rapists or Child Molesters Act, which would make states that release anyone convicted of these crimes from prison responsible for prosecuting individuals for any subsequent crimes they commit in other states. He took part in the unsuccessful 1997 coup to oust Speaker Newt Gingrich and he battled Gingrich

again in 1998 after Republicans suffered unexpected losses in the November election, going on *Larry King Live* and announcing he had the votes to deny Gingrich the speakership. He considers his part in forcing Gingrich from office to be among his major accomplishments.

Salmon, who served four years in the Arizona Senate before coming to Congress in 1994, is for the moment tired of the legislative life — too many egos to deal with, he says, and not enough opportunities to really make a difference. That said, he openly acknowledges an interest in being governor of the Grand Canyon State. For now, though, he's headed into private consulting, certain he will make use of his fluency in Mandarin Chinese and do something with China.

**Reason:** Why did you take the term-limits pledge?

**Matt Salmon:** Having served in the state legislature, I got a pretty good taste of how the long-termers tended to vote. Professional politicians — I don't care whether they are Republican or Democrat — just have a different view of money. When we talk about tax cuts, most legislators say, "That is going to cost us so much money." And I'm like, "Cost us? What are you talking about? It's their money to begin with."

**Reason:** What's been your biggest surprise in Congress?

**Salmon:** The degree of partisanship amazes me. There's not really an ounce worth of difference between what they propose and what we propose, or what we end up voting for. We act like we are doing this big, mean, ugly fight. We try to draw these distinctive lines, but the lines are really blurred. Ninety-five percent of it is theater. When you look in the eyes of the appropriators, I don't see a lot of difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. When it comes to pork barrel spending, I don't see a big difference here on Capitol Hill.

**Reason:** What have been your major accomplishments?

**Salmon:** Not going insane. (*Laughs.*) That's one major accomplishment.

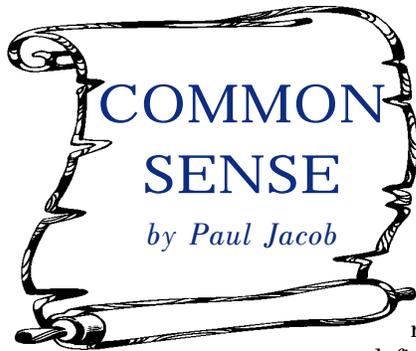
**Reason:** How would you know if you had gone nuts?

**Salmon:** I don't know. Do you think I'm insane? I think my major accomplishment hasn't been so much what I've been able to accomplish as what I've been able to stop. Recalcitrants like me dug in their feet on some of the budget measures and I think we made a difference. I consider one of my best accomplishments sending Newt Gingrich packing. It was me who stood up after the last election and said, "I have seven votes with me." I went on *Larry King Live* and several other shows and two days later he resigned. After I announced that I had seven votes he started calling around to different people trying to shore up the support, have them come around and drop a ton of ugly on me.

**Reason:** Why did Gingrich need to go?

**Salmon:** He had become so gun-shy of taking on the president in any kind of a fight that he'd been neutered — Newt had been neutered. When the government shut down, the biggest mistake we ever made was to open it

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## THE WEEKLY RADIO COMMENTARY OF THE U.S. TERM LIMITS FOUNDATION

### Self-Serve Government

"He nobly served the national interest, which he never defined as his own reelection," so says National Review's Kate O'Beirne about Rep. Mark Sanford. The South Carolina congressman is keeping his word to voters: stepping down after pledging to serve only three terms in Washington.

Sanford's not a career politician. They equate the national interest with their political interest. The longer in power, the more they'll do anything to stay in power.

First the Lincoln bedroom becomes Motel 6, now ABC's "20/20" reports that big campaign contributors are being rewarded with lavish state dinners at taxpayer expense. Our First Lady defends the practice.

When told how state dinners used to host folks "who'd contributed a lot to this country or the world," Hillary was at no loss for words: "I think contributing to the

Democratic Party is a contribution to the country." So why shouldn't she grab our hard-earned tax dollars to reward the party faithful?

The Democrats are not alone. President Bush had fewer guests at state dinners, but a similar percentage of big donors. And now it's okay for Republicans to throw around tax dollars in vulnerable districts in a blatant attempt to buy votes. "This is a battle," says House GOP campaign head Tom Davis. "Both sides are using whatever assets they have...in a legal and dignified manner."

Perhaps in the no-controlling-legal-authority world of career politicians, what they're doing is "legal." But spare us the spin about how "dignified" it all is. ■

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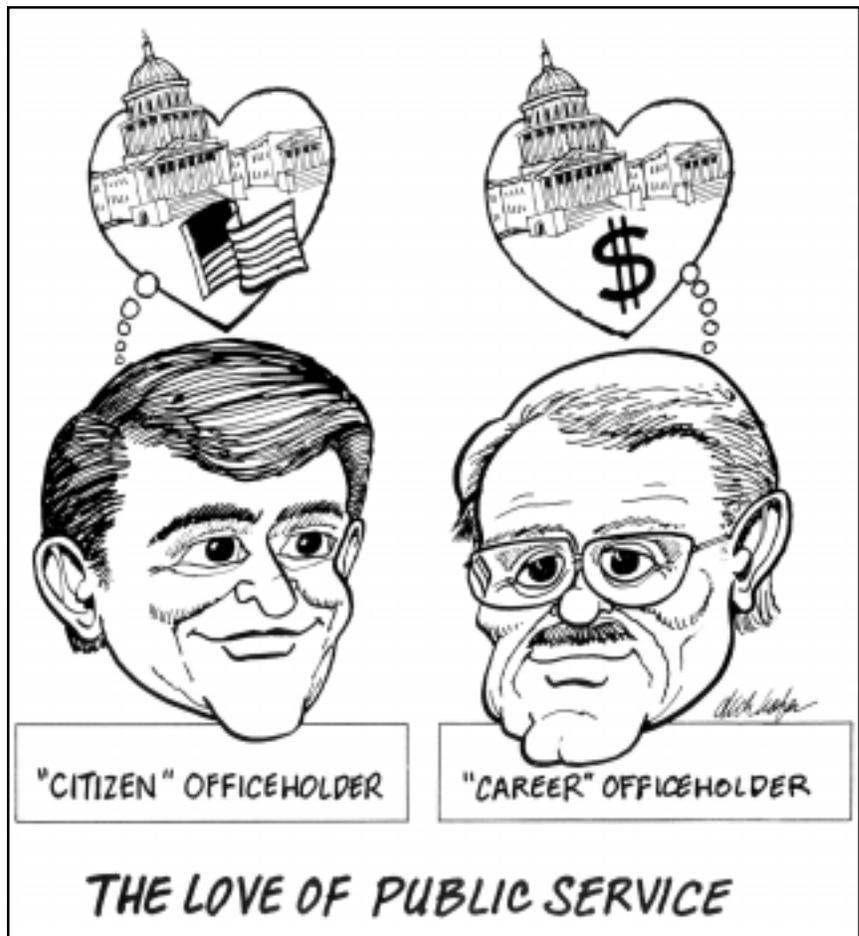
## 'Weasel King' Wins in WA-5

Term limits pledge-breaker George Nethercutt (R-WA) was reelected by Spokane-area voters during the November election, joining the 98% of congressional incumbents who were also reelected. While this is a disappointing result, there were many other victories this month that show term limits continues to have wide public support.

Although incumbents usually win reelection with little effort, Nethercutt and his accomplices — including the national Republican party and special interest groups — had to spend over \$3 million to succeed. Nethercutt was also successful in tarring his opponent, who had recently moved to the district, as a carpetbagger.

Despite his eventual win, Nethercutt's struggling campaign sent a clear message to other politicians who claim to support term limits — if you break your word, you'll become the subject of ongoing national ridicule and embarrassment.

Nethercutt will have a difficult time running for a higher office in the future. Experience shows that politicians frequently have trouble making the leap to a different office once the advantage of incumbency is removed. But Nethercutt will face an additional obstacle — the continuing stigma of the Weasel King. ■



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again. My constituents were thrilled to death to have the government shut down.

**Reason:** Why do so many of your colleagues want to stay in Congress?

**Salmon:** There are several reasons. You are kind of a mini-celebrity. You go back to your district, and people wave at you, they know who you are, and they treat you like you are something special. You come back here and it's like la-la land. You really are controlling billions upon billions of dollars. You get to go on national TV. People treat you way smarter than you are. They treat you like you are a rock star or something.

**Reason:** You're a budget hawk, but you like the space station and B-2 bombers. In fact, you want to fund the bombers at a higher level than even the Pentagon does. And you want to publicly fund a space station.

**Salmon:** The Pentagon has compromised itself time and time again with this administration. When I saw the strategy that they came up with for Kosovo, it became pretty clear to me that they are no longer independent thinkers. The Stealth Bomber technology is one that, if we get into a major conflict, we are going to be thankful that we've got.

The second issue is the space station. My belief is that without a space station, NASA really doesn't have a clear mission. I believe that space exploration is beneficial not only in the advances that it has helped us with on the environmental issues, but also the ancillary benefits, the biomedical advances that we have made, the technical advances.

I also support government spending on research and development. I believe very strongly that government has a major role to play both in biomedical and in technological things if we are going to maintain our edge as the world's superpower.

**Reason:** Do we really need the government involved in this?

**Salmon:** The private sector's idea is to compete with each other to make the better widget. But if we are talking about breaking new technologies, I just don't see it happening in the private sector. If we cut the taxes way back and provided major tax incentives for them to be in research and development, that is another route we can go. Absent that, you got to have government.

**Reason:** Are you going to run for a higher office if Sen. John McCain gives up his seat?

**Salmon:** No. I'm not running for Senate. I'm not interested in coming back here. The only other job I might run for would be governor of Arizona. I believe that position can really make a difference. But right now, I am ready to go back and make an honest living.

### **Free Duck**

#### **Rep. Mark Sanford (R-S.C.)**

Republican Mark Sanford ran for Congress in 1994 because he wanted to do something about the deficit, the debt, and Social Security. The GOP establishment wasn't

happy — he was a developer, not a longtime pol who'd attended all the right dinners and functions — and they did their best to defeat him in the primary. They sent the likes of Tom DeLay, Dick Cheney, and Jack Kemp to South Carolina's 1st District to campaign against him. "I was like, 'Why are you people here? I don't know who you are,'" recalls Sanford.

Once in office, Sanford was among the early advocates of privatizing at least part of Social Security. He also wants to free Americans to trade with Cuba. And he's famously cheap — a valuable and rare character trait in a politician. Domestically, this led him to oppose pork barrel spending, even in his own district. Internationally, it led him to pay a Cuban family \$35 a night to put him up during a 1999 visit rather than stay at a hotel. On a personal level, it leads him to sleep on a futon on his D.C. office floor, rather than rent an apartment. At least he won't have to break a lease when he leaves town.

**Reason:** Talk about the tradeoffs congressmen must make to be effective and how term limits may affect these tradeoffs.

**Mark Sanford:** The rarest of all commodities in Washington is independence. Some people told me, "You know, Mark, you are a lame duck before you've even started." I'd respond, "You're wrong. I'm a free duck, and there's a big difference." What you want is the freedom to go down with Tom Coburn last year and offer hundreds of amendments to the agriculture bill just to gum up the works. Now everyone in your own conference hates you. But you don't care, because it's what you think is right.

**Reason:** Would you have been a different congressman without the limits or would you have done the same things?

**Sanford:** Very different. You can see why in the agriculture bill: Last time around, Congress restored the mohair and wool subsidies that we had taken out in the Freedom to Farm Act a few years back. That happened because the people who passed the Freedom to Farm Act went native. Term limits force you to maintain that perspective of back home because you are up here for a while and then you are going back there. It's an anchor that keeps you attached to that other perspective.

**Reason:** You once said that being a congressman wasn't that hard, that it should take six months to grasp the basics. Do you still believe this?

**Sanford:** In the 9 a.m. Republican conference meeting today, a certain unnamed Californian stands up and says, "This is real simple. It's shirts versus skins. We're shirts, they're skins." It's all the very elementary stuff on trading marbles. Any kid who has a set of marbles in the backyard or Pokémon cards or baseball cards and learns how to trade them knows everything you need to know about Congress.

**Reason:** Why does the trading always seem to go one way then? People seem to trade more for more, which leads to the growth of government every year. Why don't you ever make a new program contingent on killing an

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# 2000 Election Term Limits Victories

## Successful Congressional Races:



**Jeff Flake, AZ-1:  
53% to 44%**



**Ric Keller, FL-8:  
51% to 49%**



**Tim Johnson, IL-15:  
53% to 47%**

## Nebraska Limits for Legislators:

**56% to 44% in favor**

## Chula Vista CA Limits for Mayor and City Council:

**76% to 24% against repeal**

## Chula Vista CA Limits for Mayor and City Council:

**59% to 41% against extension**

## Clay County FL Limits for Commissioners:

**74% to 26% in favor**

## Polk County FL Limits for Commissioners:

**73% to 27% in favor**

## Tampa FL Limits for Mayor:

**58% to 42% against repeal**

## Tampa FL Limits for City Council:

**68% to 32% against repeal**

## Prince George's County MD Limits for County Executive:

**65% to 35% against repeal**

## Prince George's County MD Limits for County Council:

**64% to 36% against repeal**

## New Mexico Limits for County Officials:

**71% to 29% against repeal**

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old one?

**Sanford:** That is the structural problem of democracy: diffuse costs and concentrated benefits. I'll have 100 visits in a week in the office. Ninety-nine of those visits people will say, "Mark, we really appreciate what you are doing on the deficit and debt and trying to reduce government spending. Keep it up. But we are here to talk to you about this one program and why it is very important." Who's going to take a trip to Washington to save 2 cents on the price of sugar because of the sugar subsidy?

**Reason:** You talk about concentrated benefits and diffuse costs. But you once testified in favor of anti-dumping action on steel, saying, "Imports now comprise over 30 percent of U.S. consumption. Georgetown Steel, in my district, had been forced to reduce prices substantially to meet import competition, and suffered financial losses." Isn't this a classic example of concentrated costs, which is the flip side of concentrated benefits? These imports may be bad for that company in your district but they're good for consumers.

**Sanford:** It wasn't an inconsistency. There was a steel bill that had anti-dumping provisions and would have provided a bailout to steel mills. I voted against it because I didn't think a bailout for steel made any sense.

I remember standing on the back of a tractor-trailer at the Georgetown Steel mill to explain that vote. It's a fairly daunting thing to stand up before a couple thousand steel workers and say, "I am going to vote against you and here's why." Basically I said that you've got the executive branch to administer the existing law and you've got the legislative branch to create new laws. What we can't simply do as legislators is create new laws if the executive branch is not adhering to existing laws.

Then I said to the sponsors of the bill, "Look, there is already a law in place that says we will not allow dumping. Because they're not enforcing that law, you guys want

to create a new law that also happens to cost a lot of money."

**Reason:** Is it just impossible to stand up on that tractor-trailer to talk about the gains from trade and comparative advantage?

**Sanford:** You could if you want tomatoes thrown at you. I was the only guy in the South Carolina delegation to vote to give the president fast track authority on trade legislation in 1998. I walked through the comparative advantage with constituents. If you think about it, you've got a trade deficit with your favorite restaurant that you like to take your wife to on Friday evenings. Or with the movie theater or the bowling alley. And you don't mind having a trade deficit with the bowling alley.

The issue is: Can you afford that trade deficit to the bowling alley? Voters respond, "That's all well and good, but the bottom line is that my ability to go to that restaurant on Friday night rests on my keeping my job. My mortgage payment depends on this job, and if I lose this job, I am not certain that I will be able to find a job paying as well someplace else and I lose my house."

**Reason:** What's the biggest surprise you've had in Congress?

**Sanford:** The local will always trump national. Tip O'Neill said that all politics are local. He was exactly right. Whatever is in the best interest of one's chances of getting reelected is what drives the institution. It's selfishness in that "I-have-got-to-stay-up-here-to-do-good, fight-other-fights" way.

These people become your friends and you don't want to disappoint them. Even though I've only been here six years, some of my best friends in life are other members of Congress and I am going to miss them when I go. And if I had been here on the 20-year program, I would be that much more hesitant about disappointing them. Because nobody likes to disappoint anybody. ■

Excerpted from *Reason*