

## Term Limits Q&A with State Rep. Geraldine Thompson (D-FL)

### *Why do you support term limits?*

**Thompson:** As a Democrat, I work to uphold the principles of my party: expanding democracy and providing citizens with fair elections. Whether that means protecting the right to vote, lessening corporate influence or getting money out of politics, Democrats need to stand on the front lines of putting power back in the people's hands.

A core piece of restoring democracy needs to be term limits for Congress. When I look at the state of congressional elections in our country, I am appalled. We call our system democratic and yet it affords voters so few choices. Over 90 percent of congressional races are either uncontested or under-contested. Corporate PACs send 90 percent of their cash to incumbents, leading to even more unfairness and disillusionment with politics. The system needs change.

### *You mentioned campaign finance reform. Do you think that term limits would do more to fix what's wrong in Washington?*

**Thompson:** You know, I don't view it as an either/or dilemma. Both issues are of critical importance, and I do see term limits as a type of campaign finance reform. When term limits are present, one can win a seat with a small fraction of the money needed to beat an incumbent. Open seats create a much more level playing field.

### *Women are underrepresented in elected office. As a woman, what impact – if any – do you think term limits would have on that problem?*

**Thompson:** I'll say this. When provided with opportunities, women will run and they will win. But the system must do more to accommodate women. We see many officeholders who came in 30 years ago – at a time of institutionalized sexism – who are still in office. I'm encouraged by a new study, from Professor Samantha Pettey, which shows term limits in state legislatures have led to a 33% increase in the emergence of female candidates. I'm also encouraged by the existence of groups like *She Should Run* and *Emily's List*.

### *You're a Democrat. Don't you think term limits are more of a Republican issue?*

**Thompson:** Not really. Perhaps some of what we saw in the 90s contributed to that perception, when Republicans campaigned on the issue and failed to deliver. But term limits are well-represented in Democratic ranks. President Obama has endorsed term limits. So did several of the 2020 presidential candidates on the Democratic side – Beto O'Rourke, Andrew Yang, among others. Speaker Pelosi approved of a term limit for leadership. It is gaining traction for sure.

### *What do you tell critics who say term limits will deprive Congress of valuable experience?*

**Thompson:** I don't buy the argument that term limits are the enemy of experience. Term limits in Florida created open seats. It allowed me – the founder of the Wells' Built Museum of African-American History – the opportunity to serve my community. I think our Democratic values of fairness, equality and inclusion are timeless and understandable. They are held by people of all ages, races, genders, religions and creeds. I frankly find insulting the notion that only 535 people in a country of 320 million can understand these values and can serve capably. We have a lot of institutional knowledge in Congress now and it has not resulted in the elimination of the stagnation and polarization that we see in that body.



Geraldine Thompson is a civil rights activist and founder of the Wells' Built Museum of African-American History and Culture. While in the Florida Senate, Thompson cast the deciding vote for a resolution calling for an Article V convention to term limit Congress. Having previously served one term in the Florida Senate, she currently serves in the Florida House.