

No Uncertain Terms

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DeMint, 10 Cosponsors Introduce Congressional Term Limits Amendment

“The waves of change that have hit Washington, DC, over the past couple of election cycles would be meaningful if those who lead Congress and its committees weren’t standard political insiders with little connection remaining to those who they were elected to serve,” observes U.S. Term Limits President Phil Blumel. “Senator DeMint and ten Senate Republicans have taken a bold step to change the culture of corruption and entitlement in our nation’s capitol.”

In mid-April, S.J. Resolution 11, a congressional term limit amendment, was reintroduced in Congress by Senator Jim DeMint, now with 10 co-sponsors on board. If enacted, the amendment would limit U.S. House members to three two-year terms, U.S. Senators to two six-year terms. Adding an amendment to the Constitution requires a two-thirds Yea vote by both chambers of Congress, followed by passage in 37 states.

The bill is cosponsored by New Hampshire Senator Kelly Ayotte, Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn, Nevada Senator John Ensign, Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson,



The Explanation.

Utah Senator Mike Lee, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey and Louisiana Senator David Vitter. A companion bill is expected to be introduced in the House.

(Continued on Page 3)

Missouri Pols Try Stale Ploy to Double Tenure

On April 28, Missouri’s state senate passed a measure (SJR 12) with a 29-4 majority to ask voters to double the current maximum tenure from eight years in each chamber to 16 years. These 16 years could be served all in one chamber or, in theory, be divided in any proportion between the two chambers. (Visit 1.usa.gov/jNacAq to download a pdf of the bill.) Now it’s up to the House to determine whether the proposed constitutional amendment goes to ballot.

The idea of “combining” the term limits on service in each legislative chamber into a single but much longer bicameral term limit is by now an old stratagem. As a practical matter, of course, the new law would amount to a doubling of most incumbents’ maximum tenure in a legislative seat, since it’s typically easier to run as an incumbent than to campaign for a new office.

The web site of the Springfield-based KY3 news station reports: “A national group that promotes

term limits decries that proposal as an attempt to gut the state’s term limits law. U.S. Term Limits says the measure is a ‘brazen attempt’ by politicians to ‘camp out’ in the House or Senate and hang on to power.” The report is hereby confirmed.

In 1992, 75% of Missouri voters said Yes to legislative term limits of eight years. The term limits law took effect in 2002. A 2011 poll shows 77% of Missourians oppose changing the current 8-year limit.



President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

Now that Senator Jim DeMint has reintroduced his Term Limits for All amendment with ten cosponsors (see p. 1), the issue is back on the national stage. We need to hear where all national candidates—including presidential candidates—stand.

First to speak out has been former Governor Johnson of New Mexico, who is remembered as the mild-mannered but tough executive who vetoed 750 bills and spoke out on controversial issues like marijuana legalization. Reporters have noted his libertarian streak. On April 21, he announced that he is running for president.

Johnson includes term limits as a theme in all his stump speeches. In typical Johnson fashion, he proclaimed on the “Colbert Report” as early as May 2010 that he is “a believer in term limits, absolutely. I think politicians will do things they wouldn’t ordinarily do when they are term-limited, and I probably come under that category. Would I have been as bold?”

The recent budget battle—with titanic posturing by both parties over minute pseudo-cuts in the federal budget—underscores the need for institutional reform, including term limits. And the DeMint bill is real term limits, mandating a maximum three consecutive terms in the House and two in the Senate.

The leadership of both parties and their lap dogs in the media will try to ignore this bill. We cannot let them.

If you want to help, please sign the online petition here supporting the DeMint 3/2 term limits bill. (visit bit.ly/16NnY7). Let your friends and family know about the page too. And consider supporting U.S. Term Limits with a financial contribution to help promote the bill. (Visit termlimits.org/donation.asp or mail your check to US Term Limits, 9900 Main St. Suite 303, Fairfax, VA 22031. Contributions to U.S. Term Limits are not tax-deductible.)

As cosponsor Senator Rand Paul argues (see p. 7), the time for term limits is now. Let’s push this issue to the top of our agendas and change Washington forever.

Visit Phil Blumel’s blog at pblumel.blogspot.com. Check out USTL’s Facebook page at on.fb.me/18fXE1.

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“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*

DeMint Term Limits (Cont'd from page 1)

When DeMint introduced the term limits amendment in 2009, it was cosponsored by Senators Coburn, Hutchinson, and Sam Brownback. In 2010, abiding by a term limit pledge, Brownback did not run for reelection. Coburn, DeMint and Toomey are former U.S. House members who left that chamber to abide by personal term limit pledges. Ayotte, Johnson, Lee, Paul, Rubio and Toomey were first elected to the U.S. Senate in 2010.

“Americans know that real change in Washington will never happen until we end the era of permanent politicians,” says DeMint. “As long as members have the chance to spend their lives in Washington, their interests will always skew toward spending taxpayer dollars to buyoff special interests, covering over corruption in the bureaucracy, fundraising,

relationship building among lobbyists, and trading favors for pork—in short, amassing their own power.

“I have come to realize that if we want to change the policies coming out of Congress, we must change the process itself. Over the last 20 years, Washington politicians have been reelected about 90% of the time because the system is heavily tilted in favor of incumbents. If we really want to put an end to business as usual, we’ve got to have new leaders coming to Washington instead of rearranging the deck chairs as the ship goes down.”

A September 2010 poll by Public Opinion Dynamics for FoxNews confirms that the vast majority of Americans continue to support term limits. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of all Americans support congressional term limits, includ-

ing 74% of Democrats and 84% of Republicans. That’s a bump from the 70% of Americans who supported congressional term limits in March 2009, as measured by the same firm.

“The myth that professional legislators are needed to deal with the complexity of government today is exposed by the \$14.3 trillion national debt hole that has been created by the very professional politicians who make this argument,” Blumel says. “We can no longer afford career politicians who defer tough decisions to commissions and other non-elected bodies. Limiting terms will allow citizen legislators to come to Washington, DC, fix the problems and then go home to resume their lives, instead of becoming encamped in the cloistered world inside the DC Beltway.”

After Miami-Dade Voters Recall Mayor in Landslide, Commissioners Favor Half-Baked Reform

When Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez was recalled from office by an historic 88% of voters, the action sent a message to county commissioners that the time for reform is now. Many reformers say that the commissioners aren’t getting the message.

Among the reforms vocally proposed by critics of county government is a two-term limit for the mayor and commissioners. Commissioners have been unable to ignore the call for term limits altogether. So they have grudgingly proposed three-term limits instead.

“Nobody is fooled by the commission’s proposal to bundle unreasonably long 12-year term limits along with the good ideas of professional pay and banning com-

missioners from outside employment while in office,” according to a Miami Herald editorial. “If this amendment were to pass, incumbent commissioners could stick around until 2024! You don’t need a poll to know that the county’s residents won’t buy it.

“Full-time commissioners deserve a fair and decent full-time salary, but a raise makes sense only if it’s tied to reasonable term limits and other good-government improvements. Do commissioners seriously believe voters would approve a package that makes them, in effect, ‘commissioners for life’ and raises their salaries in the bargain? Not a chance.

“These amendments can’t be changed at this point, but the com-



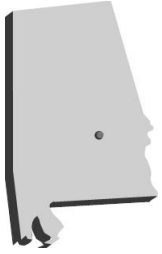
Tackling Miami vice.

missioners can decide to remove them from the May 24 ballot, if for no other reason than to avoid how embarrassed they’ll look by the poll results come May 25.”

Voters may decide, however, that a one-third-full cup of reform is better than nothing. If the weak reform package does pass, stronger charter amendments might still be

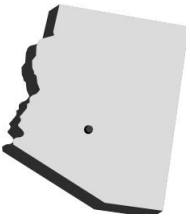
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Term Limits



ALABAMA

Alabama State Senator Trip Pittman has introduced a bill to impose consecutive three-term limits on lawmakers. The Huntsville Times opines that although there was dramatic change in the legislature in November, “when it takes 136 years to make a major difference in the Legislature, it’s time Alabama voters get a chance to have their say about term limits.” Pittman says: “Certainly this last election showed that the people, when they turn out and get motivated, make a difference. But...incumbents generally do have a disproportional advantage in terms of fundraising and name recognition.”



ARIZONA

By a 65% majority, voters in the town of Carefree, Arizona passed a ballot question in early March, Prop 421, to limit they mayor and council members to three consecutive two-year terms. It won’t solve all their problems, but at least residents won’t have to worry about permanent incumbency any more when it comes to local officials.



CALIFORNIA

The California legislature has yet to approve a June special election to consider Governor Jerry Brown’s tax hikes and other budget measures, and approval now appears unlikely. At the state’s Republican Party Convention this March, the California GOP voted to oppose the hikes as well as the ballot measure to weaken term limits, which would be decided during the special election, if it were held, instead of in February of 2012, as currently scheduled. By late March, polling showed that support for the special election had declined from some two thirds of California voters to 51%. Support was about the same in an April poll.



FLORIDA

Polk County, FL commissioners voted unanimously to challenge the county’s term limits law on themselves, which was passed in 2000 with a 70%+ majority. Dewey Smith, whose group Home Rule Charter Committee organized the petition drive, says: “They’re going against the people. It’s not unconstitutional. If it had been, why wait 10 years?” Commissioner Bob English, who brought up the issue (wasn’t on the agenda), says that his ineligibility to seek another term in 2012 under the law “is not a consideration right now.” Just a coincidence.



FLORIDA

Help keep up with news about term limits by surfing into USTL’s facebook page, where on April 15 you would have found this posting: “In the Florida State House, Rep. Matt Caldwell’s resolution calling on Florida’s Congressional delegation to support Congressional term limits passed all its committees and is just waiting on a floor vote. Floridians, please call House Speaker Dean Cannon’s office (850) 488-2742 and Rules Chairman Guy Aubershon’s office (850) 488-7433 and ask for a floor vote on HM 685. Thanks!” Visit <http://on.fb.me/l8fXE1>

in the News



GEORGIA

Georgia State Senator Buddy Carter admits that it was no groundswell of voter opposition to Chatham County term limits which inspired him to introduce a bill calling for a referendum on chucking limits on commissioners. In an op-ed for the Savannah Morning News, he confesses that he filed the bill “in response to repeated requests from the current chairman as well as a unanimous resolution passed by the current county commission requesting the term limits be eliminated.” Hmm. No wonder so many career politicians oppose term limits. So many other career politicians do.



ILLINOIS

On April 5, Lombard, IL, voters will consider an advisory referendum about whether to hold a binding referendum to impose term limits of three consecutive four-year terms for the president, village clerk and board of trustees. It’s unclear why the Lombard politicians didn’t first hold an advisory referendum about whether to hold an advisory referendum about whether to hold a binding referendum on term limits.



ILLINOIS

In early April, Fairview Heights, IL, voters passed three-term limits on local officials, “but at the same time, re-elected Mayor Gail Mitchell for a fifth term,” reports the town’s News-Democrat. That incidental “but” implies a common fallacy, i.e., that it’s contradictory or paradoxical for a voter to simultaneously a) vote for term limits and b) vote to re-elect an official who has served a longer time than the maximum tenure supported by said voter. But, obviously, the downside of voting to let an incumbent prolong an already longish tenure is only one consideration that voters confront when deciding among candidates, of whom there are usually only two to pick from during a general election.



IOWA

House Resolution 10 to term-limit Iowa representatives—to eight consecutive years—died in the State Government Committee, losing on a 11-12 vote. But the chairman of the committee, State Representative Peter Cownie, says he will keep on keeping on. “I am not going to give up on passing term limits and will be advocating for this bill again next year.” With such a narrow vote this time around, there’s a decent chance the bill could at least get to the floor with Cownie’s continued support. Let’s keep watching.



MINNESOTA

State Senator Jim Metzen, eager to increase the length Minnesota’s state-representative terms from two years to four years and state senate terms from four years to six years, is annoyed by the tiresome ritual of being held accountable to voters at the ballot box. The Inver Grove Heights Patch explains: “When Jim Metzen first became a state senator, he joked, it took him two years just to figure out where the bathrooms at the State Capitol were.” He elaborated that “two years in the house is just terrible. You barely get started. You’re always campaigning.”

And Minnesota does not even term limit its state lawmakers! Heck, why hold elections at all if they’re so irksome? By contrast, State Rep Joe Atkins says, “I think the current terms are plenty. The more often that voters get an opportunity to weigh in on your performance, I think the better it is.”

Continued on page 6.

In the News (cont'd from page 5)



NEW YORK

Assemblyman Steve Katz is proposing eight-year term limits on all state lawmakers. If there's any chance his bill will pass, it's in the present political environment, given how fed up many New Yorkers are with the legislature. Katz's legislation would also impose a four-year term limit on leadership posts. "Sheldon Silver is the classic example," he says, of a lawmaker who has overstayed his welcome. "He has been the Speaker of the Assembly for decades and most good government groups consider him the source of much of the gridlock in Albany. This gridlock is the reason why a property tax cap has not been enacted and why other meaningful common-sense legislation never passes."



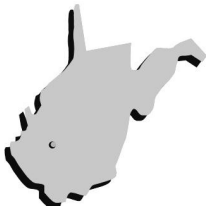
NORTH CAROLINA

A bill to term-limit the top state legislative leaders to a maximum tenure of four years maximum, backed by both House Speaker Thom Tillis and Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger, has passed in the North Carolina house and now goes to the state senate (see p. 7). If the senators okay the bill, it's then up to voters.



TEXAS

The group Concerned Citizens Council of Big Spring, Texas has gathered enough signatures to post a term-limit question on the town's May ballot. The measure would limit tenure of councilmen to two consecutive terms. The City Attorney, clarifying what she calls an ambiguity in the wording of the measure, has issued an opinion that a provision requiring a termed-out incumbent to wait for two terms before running again really means that he must wait for one term instead. The disputed provision states that "no person may be elected to the council in a general election or special election within two (2) full terms of having previously held a council position...."



WEST VIRGINIA

The WV legislature has approved a bill to ask voters to drop the term limit on sheriffs. Sheriffs who lobbied for the repeal claim that other checks on cronyism and corruption are quite sufficient. Voters acceded to a second term for sheriffs in 1973, but, according to the Associated Press, "have since rejected at least three attempts to allow additional terms: in 1982, 1986 and 1994."

Miami-Dade (cont'd from page 5)

proposed in a future election.

"Times are dire," writes Herald commentator Myriam Marquez. "[A]s county commissioners were jockeying for power after Alvarez's shellacking in the recall, they decided that term limits can only work for 12 years, starting in 2012,

and also moved to end the strong mayor form of government that voters approved. They, of course, grandfathered themselves in.... [One] reformer quipped, 'I'll be dead and they'll still be there in 2024!

"Hey, let's be thankful they did

anything. The most important reform for voters May 24: Allowing a county-appointed citizens commission, by a super-majority vote, to put charter amendments directly to the voters. Now that opens the gates to reform."

They Said It



Rand Paul: Let's Change Washington

“Some pundits like to remark that we already have term limits, they’re called ‘elections.’ This glib response ignores the fact that incumbent U.S. Senators start each election cycle with an average of \$8 million dollars in the bank. The average US Representative starts with over \$1 million in the bank.

“Most of this incumbent cash comes in the form of \$5,000 checks from special interest groups that want federal contracts or federal favors. The challenger must raise his or her contributions largely from individuals, typically averaging under \$100 per check.

“Is it any wonder that incumbents win almost every election?”

“Long term incumbency leads to politicians who seem to care more about what is best for their career than what is best for their country.

“After the vast enlargement of government under FDR, the country reacted fairly quickly to limit the terms of the President. Over 80% of the public, both Democrats and Republicans, favor term limits. What will it take to force a vote on Congressional Term Limits?”

—Senator Rand Paul

Jim DeMint: We Need Citizen Legislators

“If we’re ever going to permanently change Washington, we must change the process that encourages career politicians to amass personal power instead of making the hard decisions for the nation. We need true citizen legislators who spend their time defending the Constitution, not currying favor with lobbyists. We need new leaders continually coming to Congress to ensure every taxpayer dollar is spent wisely, not wasted on Washington special interests. We must end the era of permanent politicians that has led us to a \$14 trillion debt and a pending fiscal crisis.

“If ever there were a time to enact such meaningful legislation, it’s now, as we’re facing trillion dollar annual deficits due to the wasteful spending habits of Washington fixtures. Term limits are something I successfully fought for in the Louisiana legislature—where we’ve since seen real reforms—and I will continue fighting for them in Congress.”

—Senator Jim DeMint

Let NC Senate Pass Leadership Limits Too

“It’s not often that we’ll argue legal policy with former House Speaker Joe Hackney, a Chapel Hill lawyer and one of the nation’s most experienced legislators. But this time we think Hackney is dead wrong in his criticism of a proposed constitutional amendment that would limit House speakers and Senate presidents pro tem to two terms in those offices.

“The House has approved the proposed amendment and sent it to the Senate. If it passes by the required three-fifths votes there, North Carolina voters will decide on it in November 2012....

“As the House debated the amendment, Hackney, a Democrat, chose not to argue the merits of term limits, perhaps knowing that the idea is popular with the House membership. Instead, he argued, ‘Not everything’s that a good idea needs to be in the constitution.’

“But this is one good idea that must be in the constitution if it is to have any effect.

“There are four routes to installing term limits on presiding officers: tradition, state statute, legislative rules and constitutional amendment. Only the last route cannot be easily reversed by the legislature.”

—*Winston-Salem Journal* editorial

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“Americans know that real change in Washington will never happen until we end the era of permanent politicians.”

—Senator Jim DeMint

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