

# No Uncertain Terms

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## Blumel Blasts Latest Deceptive Attempt to Cripple Calif. Term Limits

In an open letter to California Forward, an activist group that asserts its dedication to “creating more responsive, representative and cost-effective government,” U.S. Term Limits President Phil Blumel notes that a proposed term-limit-weakening ballot measure supported by the group is yet another attempt to fool voters into saying “Yes” to a change that most do not want.

California Forward contends that it is not a co-sponsor of the measure to weaken term limits that reached the desk of the state’s attorney general in early October, although they have advocated a similar proposal. The measure would change the term limits law so that Assembly members could serve a maximum of 12 years



instead of the six to which lawmakers are now limited and Senators could serve up to 12 years instead of eight.

According to Blumel, the proposed measure “is unacceptable to U.S. Term Limits, its Califor-

(Continued on Page 3 )

## Senator Jim DeMint Proposes Term Limits Amendment!!!

The following remarks are excerpted from U.S. Senator Jim DeMint’s Freedomcast podcast of October 22, 2009. Senator DeMint, who limited his tenure in the House of Representatives to three terms, is the author of *Saving Freedom: We Can Stop America’s Slide Into Socialism and Why We Whisper: Restoring Our Right to Say It’s Wrong*.

The longer I stay in Washington, the more I have come to realize that

the problem in the federal government isn’t just the people...it’s the process.

“The system itself is so much more powerful than either party or interest group, let alone one president or congressional leader. In Washington, the rules of the game are rigged—in favor of bigger government, higher taxes, more debt, and the time-honored system of political back-scratching of ‘go along to get along.’”

“The fact is, party doesn’t matter when it comes to reform. If you want to change the policies, you have to change the process. That’s why in the next few weeks I will introduce a new constitutional amendment to limit members of the House of Representatives to three terms (which is six years), and members of the Senate to two terms (which is twelve years).

As long as members have the chance to spend their lives in Washington, their interests will always skew toward fundraising, relationship building among lobby-

(Continued on Page 3)



# President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger says term limits are “crazy.”

Referring to former state Senator Jack Scott, the governor opined that he “was termed out because we have these crazy term limits here in California and people that are that experienced like him then have to leave and move on.”

No. What’s crazy is thinking that out of 36.7 million people, only the elite political class of individuals are “experienced” enough to hold public office.

In 2003, as a candidate, Arnold Schwarzenegger said: “My campaign for governor is based on the concept that California’s state government belongs to the people, not the career politicians. As we are now seeing with the state’s budget crisis and anti-business policies, it is too easy for the politicians to become disconnected from the people they are supposed to represent. That is why I believe in citizen legislators and yes, even citizen governors. It is also why I am such a strong believer in term limits.”

Funny what a few years in public office does to a politician. In 2008, Schwarzenegger turned against term limits and sided with the political establishment when he endorsed Proposition 93, a ballot measure that, had it not been defeated, would have weakened term limits. “It takes time to learn how to govern effectively,” he proclaimed at the time. “Under the current system, our elected officials are not given the time they need to reach their full potential as public servants.”

Experience in public office is overrated. As a candidate, Schwarzenegger had a good grasp of the issues facing California when he first ran in 2003—yet he had never served as a public official. His attempts at reform failed, but not for lack of experience on either his part or that of any legislator. His effort failed because the political establishment proved to be too powerful to defeat at the polls when Schwarzenegger ran his ill-fated referendums in 2005.

Nevertheless, Schwarzenegger’s initial instincts were correct. The way to defeat the political establishment that has bankrupted California is to go over their heads and appeal directly to the people. Eventually the people will emerge victorious.

Here is what’s really crazy: thinking that the political establishment just needs “more time” to fix the very problems for which its own antics are so glaringly responsible. Schwarzenegger knew better in 2003. The people of California know better in 2009. And they assuredly will defeat SCA 24—yet another proposed constitutional amendment to weaken term limits—in 2010.

Visit Phil Blumel’s blog at [www.termlimits.org/blog](http://www.termlimits.org/blog).

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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*

## California (Cont'd from page 1)

nia supporters, and the people of California who have already voted on three separate occasions to maintain strict term limits on office holders.”

“Your proposal is particularly unfortunate because it is framed in such a way as to confuse the citizens of the state into believing that it reduces, rather than lengthens, a politician’s time in office. Specifically, your so-called ‘Term Limits Reform’ proposal calls for ‘reducing the time newly elected legislators can serve from 14 to 12 years regardless of whether the time is spent in the Assembly or Senate.’

“The fact is that under current law, no politician can serve more than six years in the Assembly and 8 years in the Senate. By lengthening the terms to 12 years in either House, your ‘reform’ would double the time politicians can sit in the Assembly and increase by a full

third the time they can occupy a seat in the Senate.

“Simply put, 12 years in either body is a career. And the amount of damage an entrenched politician can do in that length of time is im-

*Capitol Weekly reports that “the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor is teaming up with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to push” for the gut-term-limits initiative.*

measurable; just look at the damage they are already doing in just six to eight years, having already bankrupted a once-solvent state.”

GOP gubernatorial candidate Steve Poizner, who led the charge

against a similar effort to bamboozle voters in 2008, is also vocal in his criticism of the re-run. “The problem with the California Legislature is not that we should allow career politicians to stay there longer, which is what this initiative would do, but instead we need to change the kind of person who gets elected to the Legislature in the first place.”

Capitol Weekly reports that “the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor is teaming up with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to push” for the gut-term-limits initiative. No doubt many politicians and special interest groups will be united as one behind the campaign. Their opponents: advocates of good government and competitive elections, including most voters.

## DeMint (Cont'd from page 1)

ists, and trading favors for pork—in short, amassing their own power.

“Since all that power is going to disappear in a few years anyway, term-limited legislators will be far less likely to make compromises with the system.

“Opponents of term limits say that the nation needs wise and seasoned leaders to lead the nation through crises and find consensus on difficult issues.

“Well, that’s exactly what we’ve got now.... How do you think it’s working out for us?

“It wasn’t the “people” who gave us a 12-trillion dollar debt, trillion-dollar deficits, 100-trillion-dollar long term shortfall in Social Security and Medicare, the Wall Street and auto bailouts, and the health



U.S. Senator Jim DeMint

care takeover. It was those wise and seasoned leaders, who enjoy lives of privilege almost wholly immune from the consequences of their policy failures.

Term limits are not enough, of course. I hope my amendment will eventually be ratified, and then followed by other structural reforms to make our public institutions

more transparent and accountable.

“But term limits are a good start. Because if we really want reform, we all know it’s not enough just to change the congressmen—we have to change Congress itself.”

Senator DeMint recently returned from a congressional trip to Honduras, where he learned that the evidence of former President Zelaya’s “abuses of presidential power—and his illegal attempts to rewrite the Honduran Constitution, a la Hugo Chávez—is not only overwhelming but uncontroverted.” See his report for the Wall Street Journal at [bit.ly/4pRrk](http://bit.ly/4pRrk).

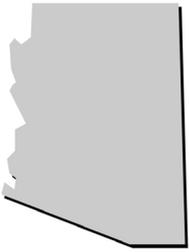
# Term Limits

## ALASKA



Although Kenai Peninsula voters passed two-term term limits on borough assembly members just two years ago, on October 6 they reaffirmed the term limits law to prevent its being rescinded by local lawmakers. Voter initiatives in the borough can be revised (or tossed) after two years, but not before then. The Alliance of Concerned Taxpayers, which sponsored the measure, reasoned that passing term limits again was only prudent. Because the measure did pass, six out of nine assembly members cannot run for reelection.

## ARIZONA



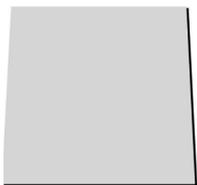
Another politician who claims to have once upon a time supported term limits but who is about to be termed out of office has “seen the light.” State Senator Carolyn Allen, who had migrated to Arizona’s senate chamber after having been termed out of the house, says she has been muttering many mea culpas about her erstwhile support for term limits because “who better than somebody who helped put it on the ballot to stand up and say we were wrong?” Whether she actually changed her mind is an open question, of course. As a USTL supporter reminds us, “Generally these politicians support term limits to get elected...but then they want to keep their positions. Did they really change their minds?”

## CALIFORNIA



By a 66% majority, Foster City voters defeated an attempt to lengthen term limits of city council members from two consecutive terms to three consecutive terms. The council had voted to post the measure unanimously.

## COLORADO



A ballot question in Adams County, Colorado, asked voters “whether their rights should be restored to elect candidates of their choice for Adams County non-judicial elected offices by lengthening the term limits of those offices.” (It’s all about “restoring” the rights of voters, not lengthening the tenure/protecting the jobs of officeholders.) The subterfuge was successful to the extent that the measure passed by the narrow margin of 50.69% to 49.31%.

## ILLINOIS



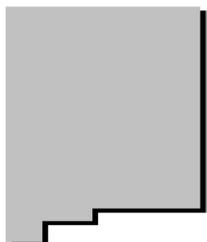
Illinois voters are unhappy with the quarter-baked reforms passed in the wake of the Blagojevich scandals, and would like to see term limits; “three out of four voters favor term limits for statewide elected officials and want to see the same applied to the leadership positions in the state Senate and House,” according to Tribune/WGN poll. Republican State Senator Bill Bradley, candidate for governor, advocates a constitutional amendment to impose ten-year term limits on fellow lawmakers and twelve-year term limits on statewide elected officials. “We have reached a point where too few people control too much and the power is too concentrated,” he says. “There’s no question that the speaker of the House, representing little over 100,000 people, has had absolute control over the state of Illinois. He’s been able to do that for nearly three decades and it’s time for that to end.”

# in the News



## MASSACHUSETTS

In support of a bill sponsored by Karyn Polito for a state legislative term limit (of 12 years), Massachusetts State Representative Jeffrey Perry says, “Now we have the culture of professional full-time politicians with staff. People get there and they want to remain there.” He reports that his work for the house ethics committee “is practically meaningless” because of the cronyism there.



## NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez, a Democrat, has lost his reelection bid. In 2009 Chavez was serving his second consecutive term in office (and his third overall) when he chose to campaign for yet another. The attempt was possible only because Chavez had persuaded a judge to scuttle the mayoral term limit. The victor is Republican State Representative Richard Berry, who won with 44% of the vote in a three-way field (40% was needed to avoid a runoff). The third candidate, former State Senator Richard Romero, is also a Democrat. Columnist Jerry Ortiz y Pino notes that four years ago Chavez won an election that was also a three-way contest among one Republican and two Democrats.



## NEW YORK

State Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb advocates a “people’s constitutional convention” that might include term limits and initiative rights on its agenda. “People are fundamentally fed up with the way state government is acting at every level. We have to do something different, something drastic.” Calls for a constitutional convention have bipartisan support (e.g., from former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former Governor Mario Cuomo).



## NORTH CAROLINA

The Alliance for Bonded Term Limits (ABTL), a new group that asks political candidates to agree to give up a chunk of their personal wealth if they violate a term limits pledge, has found its first candidate willing to make the contractual commitment: Will Breazeale, a North Carolina Republican running for the U.S. House. The Breazeale web site reports that the candidate has “signed a \$250,000 note payable to Cape Fear Volunteer Center-Kids Voting if he breaks his pledge of serving no more than three terms in the U.S. House....” The incumbent, Congressman Mike McIntyre, is serving his seventh term.



## TEXAS

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison has introduced the issue of term limits into the Texas gubernatorial campaign, saying two full terms is enough for incumbent Governor Perry or anybody in the post. “We can’t afford 14 years of one person appointing every state board agency and commission. It invites patronage. It tempts cronyism. And it has to stop now.”



## WASHINGTON

Pierce County’s Charter Amendment No. 1, a ballot measure that aimed to “increase term limits for council members and the executive from two consecutive four-year terms to three consecutive four-year terms” in the Washington state county, was roundly rejected on November 3 by a vote of 67% to 33%.

# After Thumbing His Nose at Term Limits and NYC Voters, Bloomberg Splurges \$100 Million to Narrowly Wrest Third Term, 51-46; Some Council Members Ousted

Mayor Michael Bloomberg—who last year in a show of extraordinary contempt for Big Apple voters persuaded city council members to lengthen the city’s term limits despite two electoral decisions in support of a two-term cap on his and their tenures of office—must have sensed something the pundits did not.

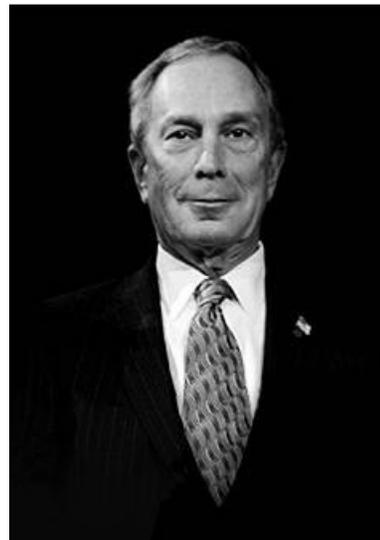
Throughout the campaign season, political observers expected that Bloomberg’s status as the incumbent and his persistent if battered personal popularity would enable him to easily snag a third term, despite the wrath of voters who had twice trooped to the polls to say Yes to a two-term limit. An array of opinion polls suggested that he would win an illicit third term handily, despite a narrowing of the gap between the two candidates as the campaign lumbered on.

But even many foes of term limits expressed outrage that the council and mayor would act unilaterally to scuttle the popular law when they could easily have again brought the question before voters. And as the months passed, voters’ memories of the disdain for their democratic rights did not seem to fade.

Sensing the depth and breadth and persistence of voter discontent, Bloomberg, who once trumpeted his steadfast allegiance to term limits law, dug deep into his personal resources. He treated the election more as if it were a presidential than a mayoral contest, spending desperately to flood the town in leaflets and commercials. In its post-election-day report of November 4, as the New York Times summarized the results: “Ninety million dollars and a near-constant loop of negative commercials about his opponent later, the mayor ended election night in possession of a surprisingly modest margin of victory—far narrower than pollsters had predicted and with 100,000 fewer votes than he won in 2005.”

By contrast, his under-funded and under-visible opponent, city comptroller William C. Thompson Jr., by late October had spent only \$6 million on the campaign. Thompson’s single most potent weapon proved to be not the city’s sagging economy and high unemployment, but the mayor’s betrayal of term limits and citizen initiative rights, a critique the Democrat amplified as election day approached.

“I believe New Yorkers have the right to have their votes respected. And I believe that Michael Bloomberg’s complete and utter disregard for the democratic process was a defining moment for all of us,” he told voters in one fiery eleventh-hour speech. The underdog also told the New York Daily News that he would “put a referendum back to the voters”



**Michael Bloomberg’s dedication to term limits has faded.**

if he were elected.

Although the appeal wasn’t quite enough to foil Bloomberg’s tsunami of a reelection bid, the mood it crystallized may help restore the city’s term limits and prevent further unilateral erosion of them.

Meanwhile, many of the city council members who had acceded to the mayor’s demand to water down term limits (the vote of the 51-member body was 29 in favor, 22 against), unable to spend tens of millions on their own reelection bids, either succumbed to voter anger or barely managed to deflect unexpectedly intense competition from a record number of primary challengers. Seventeen incumbents faced opposition in the September primary elections, with several managing to survive only by the skin of their teeth. Three were defeated.

# They Said It

## Americans Speak Out for Term Limits

*Every day, citizens across America look at their entrenched representatives and conclude: “We need term limits!” With Senator Jim DeMint renewing the legislative call for mandatory congressional term limits (see p. 1), we thought now was as good a time as any to offer a sampling of recent letters to the editor echoing a refrain also common in many Tea Party protests.*

“I think it’s time to discuss an old subject, term limits, which should be imposed on all politicians.”

—William G. Becker, Las Vegas, Nevada

“Term limits.... An idea whose time has come, despite the fact that our entrenched politicians will oppose it vigorously. Our government is broken.”

—Lewis Bohn, Morris Township, New Jersey

“Perhaps media folk rail against term limits...because the same constrictions that apply to lobbyists affect them. Once a wonk gets to know a pol, it’s easier to assert influence, arrange a meeting, send a lagniappe, or take them fishing for exclusive access.”

—Douglas A. Beilharz, Brighton, Michigan

“We are being governed by many self-serving elitists in Congress who care for nothing other than maintaining their privileged positions.... Remind your representatives and senators that they work for you. Remind them that November 2010 is only 13 months away and you will vote for those candidates of any party who will represent the people and who are for term limits.”

—Dr. Michael J. Schneider, Vail, Colorado

“Retirement is not enough—we need a serious grassroots effort to establish term limits in Congress.”

—Nick Hearne, Kilgore, Texas

“We have term limits for presidents, governors and even mayors, but not for Congress. Why?”

—W.C. Humphrey, Kansas City, Missouri

“Term limits have proven to be good for our presidency, so why not apply them to senators and representatives? An added benefit would be the opportunity for a larger number of our citizens to serve.”

—Eleanor and Wayne Hammond, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

“To keep both houses of our national assembly vigorous and representative of the population at large, we must prune it regularly and ruthlessly. Therefore, I’d like to propose a radical plan for political reform, based on term limits for our national legislators.”

—Steve Coronella, Boston, Massachusetts

“It is long past time that we have legislators who actually read the bills that they are proposing and subsequently voting on.... Without term limits, the future looks very bleak.”

—Kevin Baruth, Bluffton, South Carolina

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**“I want term limits and I want them now.”  
— Alan Wuertenberg, Salisbury, Maryland**

**see p. 7**