

No Uncertain Terms

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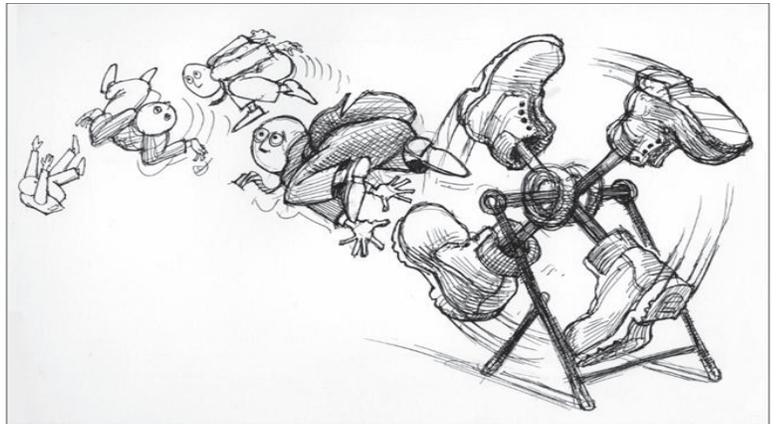
Petition Drive to Weaken California Term Limits Falls Short

California's legislative term limits will remain unmolested for at least until February 2012. A proposed ballot measure to allow lawmakers to serve up to 12 years in either chamber failed to gain enough signatures to qualify in time for the November ballot.

State representatives are currently limited to six years in office, state senators to eight years.

Signature gatherers submitted over 970,000 signatures to county election officials, more than the 694,000 signatures required place a question on the ballot.

But in order to bypass a slower, complete count of every signature, the counties' random sampling of signatures had to project that 763,790 or more signatures had been collected (i.e., 110% of the 694,000 or so needed to post a constitutional amendment). Election officials projected only 592,000 or so valid signatures,



No reprieve for California's career politicians.

below the minimum, so that a full count was necessary. That count couldn't be done in time for the June 24 deadline to qualify for this year's general election ballot. If

(Continued on Page 3)

Bennett Booted As Utahns Reject Politics As Usual

This May, Utah voters handed Senator Bob Bennett his pink slip at the GOP nominating convention. (Thanks to term limits supporter Norman Bryce, U.S. Term Limits was on the scene in spirit.) Two other contenders, attorney Mike Lee and businessman Tim Bridgewater, leapt ahead in the tallies, leaving Bennett a distant third and

ineligible to compete further. Lee went on to win the June 22 primary with 51 percent of the vote.

Tea Party members and other constituents had not been persuaded by the Salt Lake Tribune's exhortation to "save Bob Bennett." In its editorial, the newspaper wanted

(Continued on Page 3)



Above: Norman Bryce helps spread the word about term limits in Utah and other states. USTL helped fund the rolling advertisement for citizen government. The U.S. Term Limits web site is featured in the tractor-trailor-sized ad.

No Uncertain Terms

73 Spring Street • Suite 408 • New York, NY • 10012



President's Corner

BY PHILIP BLUMEL

Senator Robert Bennett seems to be in no great hurry to respond to a May 6 letter from U.S. Term Limits, in which I asked why he broke his 1992 pledge to serve no more than two terms in the U.S. Senate if elected and whether, if he should win a fourth term, "almost a quarter of a century" clinging to the seat would be enough for him.

"Given that you have not kept your word to voluntarily end your Senate service in the past, what assurances to the people of Utah have that you will not be asking for their votes again in 2016 trying to reach thirty years in office?"

I noted that back in 1992, when he made his original term limit pledge to remain in the U.S. Senate for only two terms, "you seemed to understand the importance of bringing fresh ideas and leaders into the system so that the entrenched powers never got too comfortable. Our current Congress is Exhibit A in the case against institutionalized power and in favor of imposing strict legal term limits rather than relying on the good word of those running for office.

"So...why didn't you keep your promise to retire after two or even three terms in office?"

Haven't heard back.

But I'm not really in suspense here. Not about Bennett's motives, nor about whether any number of decades monopolizing his Senate perch would have ever been enough. The lack of integrity exhibited by the career politician is an all-too-familiar spectacle.

And the latter question in particular has been mooted by Tea-Party-energized Utah voters, who withheld from Bennett the re-nomination of his party. Shortly after USTL published our open letter, Bennett came in a distant third at the Salt Lake City nomination convention. He has been rejected by voters unwilling to accept the senator's unsavory accommodations with the powers that be, including his proposal for a minor variant of Obamacare proffered as an "alternative" to that socialistic program.

"At some point," I—and his Utah constituents—told Senator Bennett, "enough is enough...."

Visit Phil Blumel's blog at 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*

Utah (Cont'd from page 1)

to know why Utah voters should “send a rookie to Washington when we have an incumbent not only knows the players, but knows how the game is played?” But expertise in playing the games that career politicians play was not one of the criteria that fed-up voters were looking for.

Critics cited Bennett’s support for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), his support for mandatory health insurance (via a purportedly alternative health care bill that echoed central elements of Obama-care), his support for porkbarrel spending, and his willingness to violate his term limits pledge (see page 2). Bennett was seeking a fourth term.

Other high-profile incumbents shown the door in recent months by voters eager for a change to-

ward more limited, less spendthrift government include New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, Representative Alan Mollohan of West Virginia and Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania.

Liz Peek at FoxNews contends that “Tea Partiers have found an organizing theme, even if they don’t know it yet. Like beaters flushing quail, they are turning incumbents out of office at an unprecedented rate—both on the left and the right. In effect, they are imposing their own special brand of term limits....”

“Should Americans celebrate these developments? Yes! Without a doubt one of the most corrosive influences in our body politic is the near-certainty of being re-elected to many Senate and House seats. The folks at Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW),

who each year publish a list of the ‘Fifteen Most Corrupt Members of Congress,’ say that the most predictive indicator of joining that unholy club is time in office. Legislators who are voted in year after year acquire an unhealthy disdain for the voters they represent. It is but a short step from comfort to corruption.”

When former Philadelphia Eagles lineman and political novice Jon Runyan won a GOP congressional primary in New Jersey, he admitted that he is not an experienced politician. “Yes, I have no experience raising taxes over and over again. Yes, I have no experience increasing the debt. Do you really think the people who created these problems are going to be able to solve them?”

California (Cont'd from page 1)

enough valid signatures have been collected after all, the measure qualifies for the February 2012 ballot.

Two previous attempts to weaken California’s state legislative term limits that did make it to ballot, in 2002 and 2008, were nixed by voters.

Another career-politician-backed measure whose status had also been in doubt, Proposition 27 to restore the power of state lawmakers to gerrymander senate and assembly districts, did make it to ballot. If passed, it would eliminate an independent commission to draw district lines that voters approved in 2008.

Why I Founded the Alliance for Bonded Term Limits

When Carolina Journal interviewed Alliance for Bonded Term Limits founder John Skvarla, one of the things interviewer Mitch Kokai wanted to know was why having term limits is “so important.”

I have been a devotee of term limits for many, many years because if you narrow down the process to its core essence and you think and hear about all the irrational outcomes that emanate from our U.S. Congress, it all ties back to one simple thing: getting re-elected. And I am a believer that many of the solu-

tions to our problems today are basic common sense. Common sense gets perverted when you have to accommodate dozens and dozens and dozens of different factions, because you don’t want to alienate anyone because you need to be re-elected. In essence, buying votes. And if you eliminate the need to buy votes and you eliminate the need to placate dozens and dozens of factions, you can step back, take a deep breath, and say, “What makes sense?”

Whether it’s the environment

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Term Limits



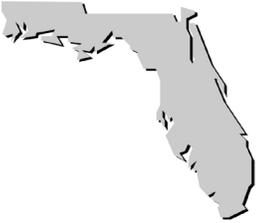
CALIFORNIA

On June 8, San Diego County voters approved Proposition B to term-limit the Board of Supervisors, all five of whom had first been elected in the mid-1990s. The vote was 69% to 31%.



FLORIDA

West Palm Beach Mayor Lois Frankel, who had been coy about whether she would run for a third term if the city charter could be revised to permit it, now says: “If I have the opportunity to run for re-election, I will run. But that’s not what this is about right now. It’s about the voters having the right to say yea or nay.” A group called Citizens for Continuing Progress is supporting a ballot measure to lengthen mayoral term limits from two consecutive terms to three consecutive terms. For the measure to qualify for the November ballot, CCP must collect 5800 signatures by August 20.



FLORIDA

A Palm Beach Gardens group petitioning to put council term limits on the ballot must pay \$987 for the city’s petition forms—15 cents per page. Only one signature is allowed per page and no photocopying of the template form is allowed. The financial burden on initiative petition has been in place since the late 1980s. Meanwhile, though, candidates petitioning to be on the ballot can get the forms at no cost. City Attorney Max Lohman says the discrepancy is justified because “One is for allowing a person to run for office. The other is [for] changing the rules of the city.” This “explanation” seems a tad non-sequiturish.



LOUISIANA

A bill to term-limit statewide elected officials failed in the Louisiana house by a vote of 68-25 in favor (70 votes are required to post a constitutional amendment on the ballot). If the measure does eventually make it out of the legislature and is endorsed by voters, it would limit the tenure of the lieutenant governor, attorney general and other statewide officials to three consecutive four-year terms.

Another bill that did pass the Louisiana state house—to permit local elections on whether to term limit school board members—has died in the senate, shot down 6-2 by the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee. Committee chairman Bob Kostelka disingenuously asks, “Why in the world are we interfering with school boards?” But Barry Erwin of Council for a Better Louisiana notes that under the rules now in force, voters can’t vote to term limit school board members unless such a vote is approved by the local school board itself.



LOUISIANA

A bill sponsored by Louisiana State Representative Nick Lorusso (HCR 63) calls for an Article V convention for the purpose of imposing term limits on the U.S. Congress. It passed the house in early June by a vote of 56 to 29 and now moves on to the state senate. Will other state legislatures take up the call?

in the News



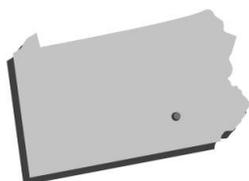
MAINE

A Democratic candidate for governor, Pat McGowan, wants to increase the length of lawmakers' individual terms in office from two years to four, but "reduce" the number of terms they can serve. The upshot is that under this proposed "reform," state legislators would serve three four-year terms instead of four two-year terms, which would weaken the term limits. Four times two is eight, and three times four is 12. Eight is less than 12.



MICHIGAN

Despite periodic complaints from Michigan politicians and other foes of term limits that they're not working out as expected, we keep seeing evidence that term limits work like clockwork. The Detroit Free Press observes: "Besides a new governor, attorney general and secretary of state, voters will pick at least 29 new state senators and 50 state House members as term limits force some politicians out and create opportunities for others." More open seats are available in 2010 thanks to term limits than has been the case in any election year since 1998, when the term limits law fully kicked in. One lawmaker, Steve Hobbs, doesn't share in the general dismay. "We're replaceable parts. It will go on just fine without me."



PENNSYLVANIA

A grand jury commissioned by Pennsylvania Attorney General Tom Corbett to investigate what's wrong with the corrupt legislature has issued a report offering nonbinding recommendations for reform that include term limits. Many of the reforms had been proposed earlier on by others in the wake of legislative scandals of 2005. Freshman Representative Jim Christiana says: "If the leadership won't take it up, then we need new leaders in 2011."



TEXAS

According to a writer for the Houston Chronicle, "Rice political scientist Bob Stein offered up some interesting percentages in response to the recent blog about support for term limits. In a 1998 poll regarding term limits for City Hall officials, 22 percent of his respondents, all registered voters, supported term limits 'very strongly.' In 2009, that number had risen to 41 percent. Seven percent opposed 'very strongly' in 1998; 12 percent opposed 'very strongly' in 2009." Thus, support for term limits, always strong, has mysteriously increased in our most recent dreary political era. Stein in a 2002 article professed to be puzzled about why "Americans are enamored with term limits for elected officials at all levels of government." Could it be that they don't wish to be ruled by a permanent and corrupt political monopoly?



NICARAGUA

Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega, who returned to power a few years ago, has been threatening to disband the legislature; he's at loggerheads with them over the fact that he stacked the Supreme Court so that he could get out from under presidential term limits. Ortega supporters have attacked opposition congressmen "forcibly denying the lawmakers' entry to the National Assembly, where the legislative body usually conducts business," according to World Politics Review. "The immediate cause of the violence was Decree 03-2010. Issued by Ortega in January 2010, the decree allows for a number of public functionaries—ranging from Supreme Court judges to congressmen and electoral commissioners allied with Ortega's Sandinista Party (FSLN)—to remain in power beyond their 2010 term limits."

Will New Yorkers Have a Chance to Restore City's Two-Term Limit?

The 15-member Charter Revision Commission appointed in March by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who two years ago conspired with city council members to undermine the two-term limit on the mayor and council members, seems set to return the term limits question to the ballot for a third time.

To stay in power, Bloomberg pushed for and then signed off on the council's move to lengthen the city's term limits from two terms to three terms. Then, despite having spent tens of millions of his own fortune against a sparsely funded Democratic opponent, he barely won his reelection bid.

Council members say a term limits question will be posted in November, but are not sure yet what its wording will be. One issue is whether voters should be asked not only about restoring the two-

term limit but also about prohibiting elected officials from again unilaterally weakening term limits. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn has told the Charter Revision Committee that council members should be allowed to retain the power to unilaterally revise any term limits law passed by New York City voters, who twice affirmed their support for the two-term limit at the ballot box before the council members unraveled those electoral results despite widespread and bitter public opposition.

NYC Public Advocate Bill de Blasio contends that the charter revision "should have one priority: giving New Yorkers the final say on term limits."

According to former Deputy Mayor Randy Mastro, "Process does matter, and it's an outrage what they did, not putting [the term limits question] back to the voters.



Mastro: "The voters felt terribly disfranchised."

Once the voters have spoken, twice and decisively, you don't take it away from them the third time. What happened last year in New York City was an outrage. The voters felt terribly disfranchised."

The CRC has been holding hearings throughout May and June on proposed changes in the city charter. It must submit any ballot measures it decides upon to the city clerk by September 2 if voters are to consider them this November.

Bonded Term Limits (Continued from page 3)

or health care, taxation—any issue you name—you can step back and I'll bet you can come up with common-sense solutions that 80 percent of the American public would be in favor of.

But the problem is it's all perverted because you need to be re-elected. And if you look at the great scholars of our time, at least in my opinion—the Milton Friedmans and people like that—they have all boiled it down to that same essence. Everything gets distorted because, as Lyndon Johnson said to an

incoming class of congressmen, "Your only job is to get re-elected." Well, that shouldn't be their only job....

I guess I had to reach a boiling point where I said, "I'm tired of flapping at cocktail parties about this stuff. I'm going to do something about it." So the Alliance for Bonded Term Limits was born ... And people have asked me: How long the term and how much money? My answer is that it's not about your platform and it's not about your term. You have to look the



John Skvarla

voters in the eye and tell them what is putting them first versus putting yourself first.

THEY SAID IT: Noonan and Boaz on the Benefits of Rotation in Office

OUR POLITICAL CLASS IS UPSET OVER LOSING POWER

by Mark Noonan

This from the Nevada Appeal just astounds me: “Even if every incumbent running wins re-election to the Nevada Legislature this year, nearly half the Senate and Assembly will be newcomers when the 2011 session begins in February.

“And some observers say the arrival of term limits—the reason most of those incumbents are gone—couldn’t come at a worse time...

“‘Term limits were a bad idea to start with and we’re just starting to figure that out,’ said former Sen. Warren Hardy, R-Las Vegas, who resigned for business reasons last year.

“‘We’re losing some of the best minds in the place,’ he said....”

Are these the same minds which ran us up on the budget rocks, twice? The same minds which have given us a horrible public school system? The minds which worked out ways to violate our State constitution and raise taxes without a super majority?

If these are the best minds in the place, then I volunteer trained monkeys to replace them. We couldn’t do any worse with that.

The best minds would be minds that understand taxes are destructive. That spending should only be on crucial needs. That government exists to secure liberties, not

nursemaid us through life. These are alien ideas to the political class, and that is why we approved term limits—to get rid of them.

We’ll just have to endure the horrors of a legislature which hasn’t learned all the ropes. They might not know how to dress up naked desire as concern for the people. Won’t have figured out that if you call tax increases “fees” you might get away with it. It’ll be a while before they develop an arrogant sense of entitlement to power.

Mark Noonan is a commentator for Nevada News and Views. For more of his opinions visit bit.ly/dAEcTD.

WHY NOT TRY TERM LIMITS? by David Boaz

Bob Bennett has been in the U.S. Senate for 18 years, not quite as long as the 24 years his father spent in the Senate. Arlen Specter has been in the Senate for 30 years. Rep. Alan Mollohan has been in the House since 1982, when he took over the seat his father had held since 1968. Sen. Blanche Lincoln told NPR this morning that she’s been trying to change Washington ever since she got here in 1992.

Do all of these folks really believe there’s no one else in Utah, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, or Arkansas capable of serving in Congress? Quite aside from the wars, bailouts, health care takeovers, and earmarks that have angered these officials’ constituents, there’s

a good case for rotation in office. Cato analysts have been making the case for term limits for some two decades. The argument doesn’t seem to have gotten any weaker in the interim.

One of America’s Founders, George Mason, made the case for rotation in office:

Nothing is so essential to the preservation of a republican government as a periodical rotation. Nothing so strongly impels a man to regard the interest of his constituents, as the certainty of returning to the general mass of the people, from whence he was taken, where he must participate in their burdens.

It looks like the voters intend to rotate a lot of politicians out of office this year. But why should it take trillions of dollars of debt and millions of dollars of campaign spending to get some new thinking in Congress? Why not make rotation in office the law?

David Boaz is the executive vice president of the Cato Institute. He and other Cato scholars post at the Cato@Liberty blog at bit.ly/clRbMr.

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“Nothing so strongly impels a man to regard the interest of his constituents, as the certainty of returning to the general mass of the people, from whence he was taken, where he must participate in their burdens.”

—George Mason, Virginia Ratifying Convention, 1788

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