

**Throw the Rascals Out:  
A Call for Congressional Term Limits**

Term limits on congressional members should be implemented to provide for the betterment of the population and the health of the Legislative Branch as a whole. Stagnation in any body, be it human or legislative, will lead to disease or death and a lack of term limits for Congress leads to stagnation in office. It is essential that the Constitution be amended in this regard to establish the greater good of the people instead of the lesser good of a politician's career. It is in our best interest to concern ourselves with this cause so that congressional members will use their time in office efficiently and wisely rather than squandering it benefiting themselves and special interest groups.

For the good of constituents, congressional members and the Legislative Branch alike term limits should be instituted. Unions, in the private sector, allow unproductive workers to retain employment by making it incredibly difficult to fire them. The lack of term limits for congressional members essentially creates a union wherein the incumbent is statistically likely to be re-elected regardless of merit. Only the most inquisitive constituents research all candidates in an election race and base their vote on virtue instead of how many signs are posted in yards around the city. It is therefore in our best interest to limit the terms of congressional members so the public is forced to investigate a candidate's legitimacy frequently. A well informed public leads to a healthy society. Term limits would also increase integrity in office. Each legislator would have a finite time to benefit the people and in turn themselves, as they would become a represented citizen when their servitude concludes. Like an infusion of fresh blood for a sick patient new representatives in Congress would awaken the Legislative Branch and revitalize the confidence within the lifeblood of our democracy: the people.

Incumbency develops deep pockets of financial support from special interest groups and discourages new candidates from seeking election. In 2012 incumbents in the senate averaged \$10,000,000.00 more in campaign contributions than their challengers, a majority of which came from super PACs and special interest groups. How are we, the average represented citizen, to believe that these re-elected incumbents have our best interests in mind? With term limits imposed special interest funding would be ineffective and the greatest good of the public upheld by fresh candidates not lulled into complacency by a self-serving lengthy tenure. Abraham Lincoln voluntarily left the House after serving only one term in support of his belief that, "frequent rotation in office is necessary for the well-being of the democracy." Lincoln is quoted here, "If our American society and United States government are overthrown, it will come from the voracious desire for office, this wriggle to live without toil, work and labor – from which I am not free myself." Currently incumbent re-election hovers around 95% compared to a 50% rate in the early nineteenth century due to voluntary turnover. By neglecting to pass term limit legislation Congress perpetuates their vulnerability to special interest funding.

A lack of term limits creates a faction of which our Founding Fathers would be outraged. At the time of ratification the Founders feared that states would fail to send any representatives to Congress

not that they would become an almost permanent fixture on Capitol Hill. In Federalist No. 60 Hamilton states, "The qualifications of the persons who may choose or be chosen. . . , are defined and fixed in the Constitution, and are unalterable by the legislature." On this basis a majority of court decisions has declared term limits unconstitutional citing the Qualifications Clause as both minimums and maximums. However, an incumbent's continued residency in Congress creates an elite ruling class in our society, the primary faction that our forefathers attempted to protect us from. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment instituted a term limit on the Executive Branch for fear of a benevolent dictator; should we not employ a similar amendment for Congress, the most powerful Branch of all?

Congressional members are elected to serve; it is not an intrinsic right once they are elected. Our Founding Fathers held private jobs while in office. Politics has become a career rather than a debt of servitude, a right rather than an honor. Regardless of your stance on congressional term limits, we can all agree that a constitutional amendment providing for their implementation would drastically change the congressional system. With a 16.5 trillion dollar debt you would be hard pressed to argue that a change is not necessary.

#### **Works Cited**

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