

Adopting Term Limits Would Go a Long Way Toward Draining the Swamp

Our first and perhaps greatest Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, ended his Gettysburg Address by calling on his fellow Americans to rededicate themselves to the “great task” of preserving our “government of the people, by the people, [and] for the people.” I share that commitment, which is why I have always supported term limits for our elected federal officials.

Too often today, our representatives and senators seek reelection not by making an argument to their constituents, but by issuing an ultimatum.

It usually goes something like this: “I know we’re all citizens in a free republic and that means you can vote for whomever you want, but given the amount of seniority and authority I’ve built up during my long career in Washington, if you don’t vote for me, our district or state will lose money, power and influence.”

But this is not a choice—it’s a ploy to increase the power of Washington elites at the expense of everyone else.

Instead of intimidating voters into supporting the candidate with a proven record of maximizing their share of government spoils, Americans should be empowered to choose the candidate they think is best-suited to help preserve our government of, by and for the people.

That is why I have always supported a constitutional amendment imposing term limits on members of Congress, and it’s why I recently co-sponsored Texas Sen. Ted Cruz’s plan to limit senators to two six-year terms and representatives to three

two-year terms.

I may introduce my own amendment that would equalize the total number of years members of the two chambers of Congress are allowed to serve (so that senators could serve two six-year terms and representatives could serve six two-year terms), but the final numbers are not as important as the principle: A government of, by and for the people requires elected representatives who are more interested in securing the common good rather than maximizing their own power and prestige.

I'm often asked whether my support for mandatory term limits means I will voluntarily impose a term limit on myself. My answer: No, because I don't want the term-limit movement to suffer the same fate as the Shakers.

Who are the Shakers? They were an 18th-century Christian sect that believed in celibacy. Now, celibacy is a fine choice for an individual to make, but it's not exactly a wise policy for an entire group of people interested in self-preservation.

So, when we do succeed, and term limits are finally in the Constitution, I will happily abide by them. But until that time, I will continue the fight to make that possibility a reality. {eoa}

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