

Should terms of us
senators
congressmen be
limited politics essay



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The twenty second amendment of the United States Constitution sets forth term limits for the United States President. It states that no person shall be elected to the office of the presidency no more than two, four year terms. Congress passed this amendment on March 21, 1947 with the requisite number of states on February 21, 1951. No serving president since Franklin D. Roosevelt has served more than two terms. Currently, our United States Senators and Congressmen are not limited to term limits that the president is subjected to. The founding father of this nation believed that politics should not be a career as long serving politicians could only bring harm to the nation. Currently, the United States is facing many unique challenges that include the involvement in two wars, rising national debt and high unemployment to name a few. Many of these challenges are due in part to the no term limit for our Senators and Congressmen. I strongly believe that our Senators and Congressmen should be limited to a certain set number of terms that he or she may serve.

When the founding fathers drafted the Constitution, their wish was to produce as brief of a document as possible. (1) Term limits were not included in the original documented for various reasons. Many of the framers felt that including term limits for Congress was unnecessary (1). Congressional service was viewed as a part-time job by citizen legislators who would go to Washington to do their duty and then return home to their farms and businesses to resume their lives once the legislative adjourned (1). The wish to not enact term limits in the Constitution stemmed from the fact that many of the founders of the United States were educated in the classics and quite familiar with the benefits of frequent rotation in political office (1). The

concept of term limits or rotation in office dates back before the American Revolution (1). The framers knew the importance of maintaining a close connection between government and the people it was designed to serve. Because of this they envisioned a “ citizen legislature” to retain control of government by the people. Only since the early days of the twentieth century have American politicians ignored this legacy and pursued careers in elective office (1).

Congressional and Senator Term limits is becoming a bigger issue with every day that passes by. The nation needs to enact term limits or we may see the United States of America self destruct. Congress, who’s arrogant spending has bankrupted our nation and destroyed our currency, sets its own self-figure pay plus perquisites and pensions as if compensation were to be calculated based on its unbridled spending rather than on prudent governance. Congress has created a counter-productive envy based tax system which penalizes extra effort and success (2). The dream of citizen legislators that our fathers believed in should not be dropped by the waist side. By enacting term limits, our elected officials will try to do more when they are in office and now hold off legislation until the next election. Our elected officials would be able to focus on the job at hand and not worry about constantly running for reelection. This will open up the process to more Americans to show what they have to offer (2). Until this issue is addressed in Washington, we will always continue to have a broken political system.

The problem concerning term limits will not simply fade away. While in the past, attempts to amend the Constitution to enact term limits have faded, <https://assignbuster.com/should-terms-of-us-senators-congressmen-be-limited-politics-essay/>

more and more support for it has been on the rise, especially in the GOP party. A group of senators in the Republican Party have been advocating as of late to push for a Constitutional amendment to make term limits a reality. South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint (R) argues that Americans know that real change in Washington will never happen until we end the era of permanent politicians. As long as members have the chance to spend their lives in Washington, their interests will always skew toward spending tax payer dollars to buy off special interests, covering over corruption in the bureaucracy, fundraising, relationship building among lobbyists, and trading favors for pork – in short, amassing their own power (3). Over time, career legislators are more likely to promote the interest of the establishment of which they are a part than that of the larger public. New blood, new faces need to enter the senate and congress, on a frequent basis. This will help avoid the highly influenced Congress that is filled with old people with old ideals.

There are too many career politicians that have been sitting in office much longer than they should be. Although, as a democratic nation, we have the ability to vote for whom we wish to see service in political offices, but the problem is, if no one new is running, what happens? The same politician who has been sitting in the same seat will get reelected because of no opposition. By enacting term limits, this may change the way our democratic nation works. Term limits may actually increase a voter's choice at the polls. What politician is going to run against a popular individual who is running for his or her third or fourth term? In states where term limits have been applied to legislators, the result has been more candidates running for office (4). This

country is founded on basic principles that we are a melting pot society, unique in the fact that we are made up of many different cultures and values. This could be beneficial in the fact that with many different views and values that so many of us have, the United States can continue to be a successful nation in the twenty first century. Continuing the views of our current politicians will only keep the country in the dark ages. Term limits have already been placed on 15 state legislatures. In each of those states, the term limits have proved successful in increasing the number of diversity of political candidates (4). It is time that the same is held true from the federal level.

Politicians elected into office are supposed to be representatives of the people, voted in by the people. As more career politicians sit in office, the more they are removed from the rest of the country. They no longer understand the people that they are suppose to be representing. While allowing senators and congressmen to be reelected, they are given the chance to continue building relationships with lobbyists and interest groups, a phenomenon that has been occurring in Washington for way to long. Too many Americans have lost faith in their government. Term limits may in fact help restore respect and faith in our government. Use of discreditable tactics like pork barreling that has powerful electoral effects is a major cause of declining respect for and satisfaction with Congress. Term limits would arrest this decline of congressional legitimacy, ensuring that members would be more truly representative of their communities and would renew American citizenship by writing into law the principle that people can govern themselves (5).

In many places of employment, there are people who feel that because they have been employed the longest, they deserve everything. It's a pretty common philosophy that many Americans believe to be true. The same can also be said of our nation's politicians. An unlimited term creates a need in the legislature for a seniority system, in which mediocre politicians thrive. If they can be reelected a few times, thereby earning the "right" to serve in important committees and chairmanships, they cement their chances of being reelected continuously, not because they deserve it, but only because of the power they wield and the media exposure they receive, enhancing their name recognition (6). The seniority system that has been in place in the country's history has proven to be disastrous. Term limits can help new individuals win support based on the merit of the work they've done and not based solely on seniority.

Like many sides of an argument there are always those that oppose a particular subject for some specific reason. The debate of term limits is no different. There are many who feel that there is already too much adequate turnover in both the house and the senate and that by creating term limits, the turnover rate would be even higher in the future than it currently is at. It was not until 1900 that the turnover rate first fell to one-fourth. And turnover remained in at least the low double digits until 1968. Since then, turnover has often fallen into single digits and has averaged at about 15.2 percent. That is far too low, especially when compared to the 40, 50, and 60 percent turnover common a century ago (7). This figure shows that the turnover is too low and that the argument that term limits would only increase that number is false. Politicians in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were

able to accomplish more in the two and three terms they served before returning home to their private lives. Turnover was high, but legislative was accomplished. The same cannot be said of the twentieth and twenty first century politicians.

The country is facing high unemployment throughout a majority of the fifty states. Many hardworking Americans have been out of work for quite some time, some more than others. While many private citizens fear for losing their jobs, there is one place where unemployment is low and that is in the House and Senate. Because of this, the public is extremely mad at Washington, mad at the corruption, the underhanded deals, the earmarks, and the sense of entitlement that comes with lifetime employment (8).

Robert Byrd is currently a Senior United States Senator from West Virginia. Byrd has been a Senator since January 3, 1959 and currently is the longest serving Senator in congressional history. Byrd is an example of an individual who has been receiving lifetime employment for more than fifty one years. Byrd also represents what our founding fathers feared. It's time to remove the security of lifetime employment and lawmakers might actually have to do something productive (8).

In addition to the opposition that many face enacting term limits, many feel that by forcing term limits, it would be considered unconstitutional. Term limits are not unconstitutional. The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution requires the presidency of the United States to have term limits (9). It was initially Congress who passed this amendment back in 1947. Congress felt that it was necessary for the president to have term limits but cries foul

when it comes to a proposed amendment for term limits for themselves. The <https://assignbuster.com/should-terms-of-us-senators-congressmen-be-limited-politics-essay/>

major political parties do not want to lose their grip of government (9).

Although, the 1995 Supreme Court ruling against term limits was struck down, majority of the general public is in favor of imposing Congressional term limits. Americans believe that term limits in Congress is positive. We should realize that our constitutes are elected to serve the citizens of this country, and because most American's believe in term limits, the government should come together to approve the necessary two-thirds majority, or 290 votes to successfully pass an amendment to the Constitution.

At the heart of the debate in addition to whether or not term limits should be enacted, a second question would be, how many terms would a congressional member be able to serve? Currently, members of the House can serve unlimited two year terms, while senators can service unlimited six year terms. This is way too long for someone to be sitting in power. It today's Congress, 42.9 percent of the House members and 45 percent of senators have been in office for 12 or more years. Term limits supporters think those 12 years in Congress is plenty (10). Term limitation will accomplish a number of positive things, but one stands out, it will improve the quality of leadership of our congressional public servants by replacing careerists with citizen legislators who truly want to serve our county and see that the United States always remains a superpower in the world.

When the delegates were drafting the Constitution, much debate and compromises occurred. One of those issues at hand was how to be sure that each state received equal representation. The final compromise became known as the Great Compromise. This compromise permitted that each state
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would receive equal representation in the senate. This bicameral legislature resulted in the current United States Senate and House of Representatives. Although the issue of state representation was addressed at the convention many who oppose term limits feel that this would in fact become a disadvantage to many of the smaller states. Smaller states historically though have attempted to compensate for this by continually reelecting incumbents regardless of their views on issues in order to accumulate power with seniority. Without such seniority, goes the argument smaller states would be at the mercy of larger states (5). The 23 states which had placed term limits on their congressional delegates before the Supreme Court outlawed this practice; all of those disregarded this argument regardless of size (10). No citizen themselves ever complained about their “ equal” representation regardless of the size of the state. Citizens just want their representatives to do legislation that will benefit them and the country.

In conclusion, our founding fathers who drafted the government of the United States believed that it was important that no politician should make politics a career. Their philosophy was to serve their country and go home. Because too many have become career politicians, Congress has bankrupted our nation and forgot what their true duty is as congressional members. Although support for an amendment continues to gain momentum, there are still many who oppose having term limits. Many feel that they have the right to continue to serve because of their seniority such as Senator Byrd of West Virginia, while others feel that there is already too much turnover and term limits would only cause an even higher turnover. Others argue that term limits would be unconstitutional. Each member in the House can serve

unlimited two year terms and members in the senate can serve unlimited six year terms. If a Constitutional Amendment is passed and congressional members are subjected to term limits, the country could successfully eliminate many of the problems that the country is facing. It was not the citizens of this nation who caused the massive trillion dollar deficit; it was not the citizens of this country who created the long-term short falls in both Social Security and Medicare. The Wall Street and auto maker and bank bailouts were not because of the American citizens. These issues that plague our nation were issues created by our long extended serving members in the House and senate. For these reasons alone, I strongly believe that our Senators and Congressmen should be limited to a certain set number of terms that he or she may serve.