

Three, last year, we saw the embarrassing spectacle of long-time incumbents reduced to telling their electorates that they should be reelected strictly because of their seniority.

This type of campaigning amounts to a threat to the very people these representatives were supposed to represent. It's like trying to make your own constituents an offer they can't refuse. That's not what this democracy should be about.

Seniority has become the last refuge of a politician with nothing left to say. Term limits would hold our elected officials to a higher standard of political debate—policies, responsiveness, and accomplishments.

Four, the final argument I would like to address is the claim that if we want to limit a politician's terms, we should vote that person out of office.

The problem with this point is that a State with an entrenched incumbent often has a great incentive to keep that person in office for decades at a time. From a key committee position, one person representing less than one-quarter of 1 percent of the country's population can dominate an area such as appropriations, commerce, or defense policy for decades.

That is the very type concentration of power that we have traditionally sought to avoid in this country. No one district, and no one State, should be able to hold the rest of America hostage to its agenda or the whims of its favorite son.

One of the things that compelled me to run for Congress was that as a small businessman my family business was forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars to meet the dictates of entrenched incumbents here in Washington. I couldn't vote for these representatives who were dominating some of the committees that directly impacted my business, but I was paying the bill. I knew that passing term limits was one way to change that.

The new Republican majority has taken a giant step forward in addressing this problem by limiting the terms of committee and subcommittee chairmen, as well as the Speaker of the House. But, we need to keep moving ahead.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, as this country moves into the 21st century, I believe that we will need the input and expertise of Americans from every background and profession. The argument against term limits places a premium on experience in Congress and discounts experience in every other part of life.

That is a formula for a ruling class detached from those who they represent. That is the opposite of government of, by and for the people.

Adoption of a term limitation constitutional amendment would return us to a true citizen legislature and help win back the faith of the American people in our democracy. I urge my colleagues to vote for the version of term

limits they support and vote "yes" on final passage of this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. TIAHRT] is recognized for 5 minutes).

[Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

TERM LIMITS A NECESSITY FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, term limits, the contract item with perhaps the most public support, comes to the floor of the House tomorrow and some say it has the least chance of passage. I hope not. Eighty percent of the Republicans at least support it, all we need is 40 percent of the Democrats in the House to support it for passage.

In my view, term limits are not only a reasonable approach but a necessity for good government. Some will argue that the results of the last election in November which brought each of my colleagues here to the 104th Congress indicate the need. However, the fact is that despite an above average turnover in the 103d and 104th Congresses, incumbents still enjoy a 9 in 10 chance of reelection. More importantly, in the 103d Congress the average tenure of Democrat committee chairmen was 28 years.

The fact is that the current system allows certain people to spend a lifetime in Washington while some quickly fall out of touch with their constituents and consolidate the power base that used to ensure continued success in passing wasteful and pork barrel programs.

□ 2015

Additionally, these career Members of Congress continue to stockpile money from special interest groups, making all the more unlikely that they could be defeated. The disparity of fund-raising capability discourages many qualified individuals from running in the first place.

After California passed term limits in 1990, the number of candidates for office increased by 40 percent.

Mr. Speaker, after 40 years of one-party rule in this Congress, before last November, Congress had grown insulated, unresponsive to the will of the American people. President Clinton has consistently opposed even the consideration of term limits and will again defend the status quo.

Now with Republicans in control of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, for the first time in history we will vote on term limits. I am committed to passing term limits, and I am working with like-minded Members of Congress to create a citizen legislature that is accountable to

the American people and not beholden to the special interests.

Term limits will end congressional careerism, and the American people will be better served under this kind of reform.

There are three major Republican bills that will come before the House, the Inglis bill, which calls for 6 years maximum, the McCollum bill, 12 years, and then Hilleary's bill, which calls for the States to decide the exact terms. Whatever the bill is, we believe that term limits is a step in the right direction, an idea whose time has arrived.

American democracy cannot be considered truly representative in the current system that perpetuates incumbency and seniority-based power. The seniority system forces a network that doles out power and influence according to time spent in office. Term limits will cause a systemic change in this internal power structure of the Congress. Instead of committee chairs and appointed leadership positions being granted on the basis of seniority, merit and competency will be the basis for our future leaders.

CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. ZIMMER]. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the other participants who are going to let me go at this point in time.

You have heard a lot of good intellectual arguments why we need term limits. I am sure there will be some made tonight and tomorrow why term limits is a bad idea.

All I know is this, that of the 73 Republican freshmen that serve in this body, probably 90-95 percent of us support term limits. I think we are very close to the people in terms of the last election. I think the sophomore class above us has a high percentage of people supporting term limits, because we understand why 80 percent of the American public wants this body to impose term limits on itself.

Having said that, one thing that I think I need to say is that term limits is not going to cure every problem in America, and it should not be billed that way. It is not going to make us overnight more efficient. It is not going to balance the budget. But it will fundamentally change why people come to Washington, DC, and why they seek office.

What it will do in my opinion is you stop playing the game to become a subcommittee chairman, a committee chairman, and see how far you can go. You try to make the world better that you are going back to rather than try to make the world better that you are in up here.

I think the fundamental reason we need term limits in this country, Mr.