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.

Speaker, is to change the motivation of why people come to Washington, DC. I think spending will get better. I think a lot of things will get better up here. They will be less interested in trying to find a pork-barrel project to get us reelected and more interested in trying to make the world better where we are going to go back to, and that is home.

There are going to be four versions to be voted on tomorrow. I think we are going to fall short on all four of them. I am sorry. There is a lot of blame to go around. I tell you, the Republican Party has some share in that blame, and certainly the Democrat Party does, too.

We are probably going to deliver 80 to 85 percent of the Republican Conference on term limits. We need help from the Democratic Party. If you had every Republican voting for term limits, you would still need 60 Democrats. We are going to fall short for a variety of reasons, and I think the blame needs to be bipartisan.

We have got four versions to vote on. One version is by my roommate here, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. HILLEARY]. He has a version that says 12 years, and if there is an existing State law more restrictive, it stands. I like that version. That is why I came to Washington, DC, was to improve Congress, not to overshadow the States. That is the best, I think, of the four. I am going to vote for all four.

Because I do not want it to be said the reason it failed was because of LINDSEY GRAHAM. I am going to vote for the Democratic version that says 12 years retroactively applied which simply means this, if you have been here 12 years or longer and the amendment is passed and it is ratified by the States, you lose your job. That is not the best way to implement term limits. I would rather have that than nothing.

I challenge my Democratic colleagues to deliver enough votes to make on version get out of the House. This is probably the most important thing that we will do in the 104th Congress. It is probably the most important vote we will take in my political life, because if you want to change politics, you need to change the reasons people seek the office. That is exactly what term limits does.

I implore my colleagues on the Republican side to deliver the votes to get an amendment out. If the Democrats play a game of chicken, loading up the votes for a retroactive term limits bill, let us meet them. Let us have term limits in some form rather than no form.

I am going to vote for term limits in any fashion, because I believe it fundamentally will change the way we govern in Washington, DC. That is why I think I got elected is to come up here and fundamentally change our government. I believe that is why 80 percent of the American public from Maine to California, from the Deep South to the Far West, support term limits, because they feel their Government does not serve them. It serves the institution, and if you really are serious about reforming government, it needs to start in this body.

This is the only vote we will take with the Contract With America that applies to us as individuals. It is going to be a gut-check for people in this body.

SUPPORT THE HILLEARY TERM-LIMITS PROPOSAL

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

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, I guess it has been about a month ago now that some fellow freshmen and I got involved in this term-limits debate to the extent we are now. People here may remember that the House Committee on the Judiciary reported out a bill that in my opinion, did not really resemble real term limits. It said you could serve 12 years, lay out a couple years, serve 12 more years, lay out a couple more years, serve 12 more, et cetera.

It also specifically had language that preempted the work that people had done in 22 States that had their own term-limits laws. I felt I could not keep my pledge to my constituents that I made during the campaign that I would truly be for real term limits.

So I got involved with some of my fellow freshmen. We came up with a bill, drafted a bill, that simply did this: It said you could serve 12 years in the House, 12 years in the Senate, but also it had the additional language that said the States would be specifically protected in the work they did and the wishes of those people in those 22 States would be protected. I think that is very important.

And people like the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. MYRICK], the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH], the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT], the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. SALMON], the gentleman from Kansas [Mr. BROWNBACK], the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS], the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM], who just spoke, the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. HUTCHINSON], the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON], the gentleman from Washington [Mr. TATE], and many, many others have worked very hard and feel the same way on this.

It is very important to people like Bill Anderson, who lives in Texas County, MO. Mr. Anderson is not a Republican or a Democrat. I do not think he is a liberal or conservative. He is simply a man who has never been involved in politics before. He is simply a man who felt very strongly this country was going in absolutely the wrong direction. He felt he had to do something about it. He got out in parking lots in hot summer days, got thousands of signatures on petitions, got in Missouri this issue put on a referendum for a vote, and it passed.

There are a lot of Bill Andersons all over this country whose hard work and wishes and rights of him and his fellow, people who helped him, will simply be washed away if we do not specifically protect those rights.

There is no other bill that we are going to vote on that will specifically give that protection. There are some that are silent. What that means is that nine black-robed men and women who work in a building very close to us here who are unelected, permanently tenured will decide this issue, not people who are elected representatives like our colleagues and myself.

I think it is important that we vote on the Hilleary amendment. We have had so much support from the grassroots. Every grassroots organization that you can think of is behind our bill that has anything to do with term limits: United We Stand America, American National Taxpayers' Union, American Conservative Union, Citizens Against Government Waste and on and on.

The reason they think this one is the bill is because it gives the most for the most people. It is a sort of middle-of-the-road bill. It has 12 and 12 for people who believe that you ought to be able to serve 12 years, but also says States can do something less if they so choose. It also kind of protects what I think is the most democratic form of legislative process in this country, that is, the referendum process such as in the State of California. It is almost part of the mystique of California. It is part of the legend of California that they have this referendum process. It is very famous.

All the propositions that have become so famous all across the country, and this is the only bill for the Members of those States that have the referendum process. It is the only bill that will specifically protect the wishes of the voters in those States.

So I ask everybody to come on board and support the Hilleary amendment. But no matter which bill comes to final passage, I think term limits, the concept of term limits, must supersede everything else, and I beg my fellow Members on final passage to vote for term limits.

Let me tell you, people say that this concept of term limits has no chance in this Congress. I do not know if I am willing to concede that yet. You know, our former Speaker felt pretty strongly about being against term limits. He is no longer with us. I think this is the first time, because this is the first time we are going to be able to take these little cards, stick them in the slot, and a recorded vote, the first time the people are going to have to actually go on record and think long and hard about are they going to face the voters in 1996 without a yes vote on term limits.

I think we have not seen how many votes we are going to get on this. I