

to be considered deliberately and fully at the appropriate time. I think it is wise that we approach it from the standpoint of what is good for the country; that neither side try to make undue political points at the outset. Otherwise, we are not going to get anywhere. I simply say, I share my colleague's concern and desire to get anything up for a vote.

It has taken 49 years to get the matter I am about to discuss up for a vote in this body, so I would like to turn to that now unless my colleague has any more comments.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). Twenty minutes has expired. Morning business is now closed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO LIMIT CONGRESSIONAL TERMS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 21, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 21) proposing a constitutional amendment to limit congressional terms.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Pending:

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3692, in the nature of a substitute.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3693 (to amendment No. 3692), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3694, of a perfecting nature.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3695 (to amendment No. 3694), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson amendment No. 3696, to change the length of limits on Congressional terms to 12 years in the House of Representatives and 12 years in the Senate.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3697 (to amendment No. 3696), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson motion to recommit the resolution to the Committee on the Judiciary with instructions.

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3698 (to the motion to recommit), to change instructions to report back with limits on Congressional terms of 6 years in the House of Representatives and 12 years in the Senate.

Thompson (for Brown) modified amendment No. 3699 (to amendment No. 3698), to change instructions to report back with language allowing each State to set the terms of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate from that State.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, this is a constitutional amendment to limit the terms of Members of Congress. It calls for a limitation of 12 years, 2

terms in the U.S. Senate; a limitation of 12 years, 6 terms in the House of Representatives.

As I indicated, the last vote on term limitations in this body was in 1947, so it has taken about 49 years to get the second vote on this, not that anybody has been particularly pushing for it.

I believe it is the first constitutional amendment for term limits to ever come out of committee. This had a full committee hearing. It passed out of the Judiciary Committee, and now, for the first time, a committee bill is on the floor ready for consideration. I think it is long overdue.

In this body, it has been my observation that we pay as close attention as we can to what the American people want. We pay as close attention as we can to what our constituents want. We have offices all across the various States. We go to those offices, we listen, we get tallies on what people are calling in about, what people's concerns are. We go out and we pride ourselves, as elected Members, having town hall meetings, and we say a large part of the purpose of that is to listen, to see what is going on so we can be reflective of the opinions of the people that we represent.

We run our campaigns on the same basis. We say, let us be your Representative and we will go up and listen to the people. Let us turn the Congress back to the people. We try to respond every time we get the feeling that 51 percent of our constituents want something. There is nothing more responsive than someone who has been elected to office, who feels his constituents are pressing for something, even by the barest of margins—except in one area. That is the area we are dealing with here today, term limits.

We see poll after poll after poll, and we poll early and often. Sometimes it is like all that is happening around here is a rendition of those polls. My colleague from Massachusetts was talking about how many women favored minimum wage, how many Republicans, how many Democrats, all based on polling results. Who is ahead in the Presidential race? All these various issues. Who is for us and who is against us? By what margin? The distinction between last week, when 52 percent of the people were for this proposition, and the week before last when only 49 percent of the people were for this proposition, so we see a little movement there.

There is extreme, extreme attention to the temperature of the American people and to our constituents, except about one thing, and that is term limits. Poll after poll indicates that upward of 75 percent of the American people favor term limits, and the overwhelming majority of States and localities that have had the opportunity to vote on term limits have come out in favor of term limits. Mr. President, 22 States have imposed term limits on themselves, even while other States were not doing so, saying: We think it

is an idea whose time has come. It would be for the benefit of America for us to set the example, and we are willing to impose it on ourselves even though there is no obligation for other States to do so.

Yet, even in light of this overwhelming majority of the American people who feel something is basically going wrong with their country and they are searching for something fundamental to do about it, we pay absolutely no attention to what is going on. We pay no attention to the overwhelming sentiment of the American people with regard to this one area.

The case can be made that we ought to be more reflective in some cases, that we ought to be a little more isolated. This is supposed to be a deliberative body and sometimes we do not take enough time to really reflect on the important issues that are facing us. Sometimes we get too caught up in the number of bills that we can pass and the gamesmanship of what is going on in this town. But, why is this the only one area where this rule seems to apply to this body, and no other area? The answer, of course, is because in a Congress that busies itself in regulating other people's lives and purifying other institutions, other businesses, other individuals, that changes when it comes to doing something about ourselves, even something as innocuous as a 12-year term. This constitutional amendment would not even need to be ratified for 7 years. Then it would be prospective. It is the most minimal first step toward trying to put us in a position to face the 21st century that we could possibly think of. It probably would not affect anybody in this body right now, another 12 years on top of what they have already served, and on top of the 7 years it might take for ratification of the constitutional amendment. That is not exactly a drastic move, not exactly a revolutionary change. Yet we have all this difficulty even getting to first base.

Let us talk about what this is not all about, because the detractors of term limits, in their scrambling around to try to come up with reasons why in this particular case the overwhelming majority of the American people are wrong, have set the terms of the debate for us, in many cases.

What it is not about is vindictiveness. A lot of people are angry with the Congress of the United States, but this is not about vindictiveness. Life is too short for that.

On the contrary, Mr. President, I really believe that imposing term limits on ourselves would do more to restore the dignity and the esteem of Congress with the American people than anything else. I pointed out the other day that columnist George Will wrote a book awhile back called "Restoration," and it was about term limits. Most people would have a hard time seeing that connection until they got into it and read it.

The point is, and a very valid point, I think, indeed, is that at the time our