

vote this week will join the 1995 House vote to produce first-ever votes in both Houses. The vote in the House was held in March 1995 and received a majority of 227 votes. Passage, however, of a constitutional amendment would have required a two-thirds majority, or 290 votes.

For the first time in history, the Senate will vote on term limits. While the measure is not currently expected to receive the necessary 67 votes required for passage, this vote is an important beginning to what I believe is an inevitable outcome. While approval by two-thirds of the House and Senate will not be easy, the support of 75 percent of the American people will make a difference as we continue this important effort.

When I campaigned for the Senate in 1994 in my State, I heard from one end of Michigan to the other a consistent and very, very responsive, positive public outpouring of support for term limits. People felt that the Congress, in particular, and Washington as an institution was out of touch. They felt that a lot of factors were at play, but, most importantly, they felt that too many people ran for Congress or for the U.S. Senate, went to Washington, and ultimately stayed so long that they lost sight of the reasons that they ran for in the first place.

Promises in campaigns were seldom, if ever, kept. Indeed, by the end of a term the promises of the previous campaign had often been totally forgotten. People felt that this lack of contact and communication, this out-of-touch, Washington, inside-the-beltway mentality was the reason that Washington had not been able to deal with important problems confronting America and, in particular, the problems of the Federal budget deficit and runaway Federal spending.

People in my State believe that they have sent too many of their hard-earned earnings to Washington. They would like to keep more of what they earn. They feel the Federal tax burden is too high. They cannot understand why they have to balance their family budget, but we in Washington have not been able for 25 years to balance the Federal budget.

The reason, they feel, more than any other that has led to this problem, this lack of responsiveness, is that too many Federal officials have been away from home too long, too many Federal officials have lost touch with voters back home and do not understand the things that motivate the average working families in Michigan.

Mr. President, I do not think Michigan is atypical. I suspect that virtually every Member of this body hears the same thing in their State. I suspect Members of the House of Representatives, likewise, hear the same sentiments expressed to them when they are in their constituency.

Now, this Congress has begun to move, I believe, in the right direction to address some of these concerns. Last

year, for the first time we voted in the very first action taken by the Congress, to apply the laws that apply to the rest of the country to Members of Congress themselves. We put an end, in the Congressional Accountability Act, to the double standard that said that things we adopted here as Federal law were fine for the rest of America but not fine for ourselves. That has begun to change the way we do things here in the U.S. Senate.

I have been intrigued by the fact that so many of my colleagues and I have found that meeting the various labor and other laws, requirements that we now are required to follow, have changed the way we operate our office and made us more mindful and concerned about labor relations and other issues that come on a day-to-day basis before us in our Senate offices. In the same way that has put us more in touch, I think nothing will put Congress more in touch with people back home than a frequent and regular turnover in the composition of the House and Senate of the United States.

Mr. President, I believe that the term limits movement is a movement that will only grow. If 75 percent favor term limits today, I believe it will be even a higher percentage in the years to come. That is why whether or not we are able to succeed this year in passing term limits, it is only a matter of time, I believe, before we will have term limits as part of our Constitution.

To that, I want to commend the majority leader, Senator DOLE, for scheduling the vote on term limits here in the Senate. For all the talk about bringing reform to Congress, I believe our best approach to make Congress better is through term limits. I urge all of my colleagues to support this much-needed reform of our political system. I urge them to support it because it is the right direction to take. I urge them to support it because it has such strong popular support. I also urge them to support it because I think it is only right that the citizens of the various States have the chance to set the limits on terms of Federal officials.

To conclude, that the citizens of Michigan do not have the constitutional authority to determine how long their Members of Congress and their U.S. Senators may serve, is, in my judgment, a strong repudiation of the rights of people in a free democracy to make decisions for themselves.

Mr. President, I close on this note, by urging my colleagues to support the term limit efforts we are undertaking this week.

Before I yield the floor, I will ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 2 minutes to make a brief statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SYMPATHY TO MICHIGAN FAMILY

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deep condolences

to the entire Bitar family of Dearborn, MI, who lost their two sons due to the most recent violence in Lebanon that occurred last Thursday. Hadi, who was age 8, and his brother, Abdul Mohsin, age 9, were visiting their grandmother in their home village of Qana during their spring break from school when the fighting broke out last week. They sought refuge in the United Nations shelter, which was tragically bombed.

The loss of civilian lives, Mr. President, no matter where it occurs, is always devastating, but it is especially tragic when children, in this case, 8- and 9-year-old children, are killed senselessly. When a loss such as this occurs so close to home, as it did in an important city in my State, many individuals in the Michigan community were affected. They feel this very deeply. I am here today to speak on their behalf.

This occurrence highlights both the urgency and the necessity of bringing peace to the Middle East. I strongly urge the administration to persist in trying to negotiate a cease-fire in Lebanon and to bring an end to the hostilities immediately. I sincerely hope that no more tragedies such as this occur and that no more innocent lives are lost while these negotiations persist. Yesterday, I attended a special prayer service for the two boys who were killed last week. The ribbon I am wearing today, Mr. President, was given to me at that service as a tribute to the lives that have been lost. All I can say, Mr. President, is I intend to be on the floor every day to talk about what is going on, and these tragedies, until, hopefully, we will see a cease-fire and an end to the senseless killing and the bloodshed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO LIMIT CONGRESSIONAL TERMS

The Senate continued with consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment before the body is amendment 3698.

Is there further debate?

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, thank you for the recognition. I want to thank my friend, the Senator from Michigan, for his outstanding analysis. I also want to express my sympathy to him and to those citizens of Michigan whose children were victims of the latest bombings. I commend him for his work in this area and thank him for bringing our attention to this matter.

Mr. President, I want to talk about term limits. I want to mention some important reasons why I think it is essential that Members of this body support the opportunity of the States to ratify a constitutional amendment.

The Senate does not have the authority to amend the Constitution. We merely have the authority to extend to the States the right to ratify a proposed amendment to the Constitution. To vote against this proposal is basically to say that the wisdom of the