

## Term Limits and Campaign Finance Reform

As we have mentioned elsewhere on our website, our Editorial Board does not believe that there are very many changes that need to be made to the “social contract” between the US government and its citizens (i.e., the US Constitution) - - we believe the country’s Founders did a pretty good job. However, there are several references in the Federalist Papers (most notably in Federalist Papers #s 41 and 57), where one of the major concerns was (and continues to be) controlling the lust for power (by an individual and/or collectively for the government as a whole).

Even though there has always been this concern since Day 1, the Founders did not write specific Term Limits into the US Constitution. However, We The People did finally address this issue in regards to the Executive branch of the US government (the President) via the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, which was passed by Congress in 1947 and ratified in 1951 -

*No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of President more than once.*

Our Editorial Board believes that now is the time in our country’s history, to extend this concept of Term Limits to the Legislative branch as well. It was never intended that a person should “permanently own” an elected position. This is borne out in the Federalist Papers. We also believe that one of the responsibilities of an elected official is to identify, educate and train their potential successor. We believe that the concept of Term Limits should be applied to the executive branch and all legislative branch positions at both the federal and state level. Although beyond the scope of what our Foundation intends to accomplish, we also believe that this concept of Term Limits (and the responsibility to identify, educate and train their potential successor) is appropriate at the local level as well.

Many people will argue that implementing Term Limits will discourage people from following their interests (and passion) in regards to public service. However, when you consider local executive branch and legislative branch positions, and state positions, and federal positions, there are plenty of opportunities for an individual to pursue their passion for public service. What we need to protect against is an individual’s (sole) passion for power, and the potential passion for self-enrichment.

We also support the concept of one re-election for an elected position. This re-election could occur in the subsequent election or (if the person wants to take an intervening break) at some other point down the road in the future. In a way, this opportunity to run for re-election represents a way to help an elected official assess their degree of success in fulfilling the responsibility of the position, by asking the electorate to re-affirm their performance in the re-election process.

[Just as an aside, our Editorial Board is currently debating whether we should recommend that the US Supreme Court also be elected by We The People, and serve specified terms, with one potential re-election. We recognize that there are good and valid reasons why the judicial system was set up in the manner that it was established, to keep the interpretation of the country’s laws separate from the political (election) process. Accordingly, we currently do not believe that the concept of Term Limits should be applied to the US Supreme Court, but are interested in hearing other viewpoints from our Foundation’s members. ]

Our Editorial Board is also discussing the issue of Campaign Finance reform. We appreciate the position of the Supreme Court in this arena - any attempt to regulate or set limits on the funding for

the elections process is an infringement of the Freedom of Speech (i.e., money talks). However, we also believe that many of the rules that have been put into place over the years regarding the “fair” maximum amounts that an individual and/or group (PAC) may contribute are generally OK.

Campaign Finance is a highly complex “regulatory” issue, and we don’t have any specific recommendations at this point in time, but we may be making some recommendations on Campaign Finance reform in the future, based on feedback from our Foundation’s members.

The bottom line is that the “problem” with the election process is not so much the amount of money that is spent in the election process to “buy an office”, but the problem is that the election process has a tendency to turn off a good portion (approximately half) of the electorate. Too much of the money raised can be spent on personal attack ads, rather than on addressing government policy issues and how a candidate’s positions on the various issues can distinguish that candidate from their opponent. We’re not saying that personal integrity issues aren’t important (they can be vitally important), it’s just that it is an unfortunate situation, that this aspect of the political process has a counter-effect of turning off the voting public.

Oct 2013