

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TERM LIMITS

**DOLE URGES SENATE TO MOVE FORWARD TO FINAL PASSAGE;
ASKS PRESIDENT TO DROP OPPOSITION & DELIVER VOTES NECESSARY
TO PASS CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, AND GIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE
OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE CHOICE**

Today the Senate takes an historic step. The Senate will today vote on whether to move forward to passage of a Constitutional amendment that would limit the terms of members of both the House and Senate.

I am proud that this step is one promised by the Republican party in our last two party platforms. I am proud that we made this promise in 1994. And I am proud that the Republicans in the House of Representatives delivered on this promise, and that the Senate will have a chance to do so soon.

I also would like to acknowledge the fine leadership of our newer members such as Senators Thompson, Ashcroft, and Inhofe, who have joined other leaders like Senator Brown in fighting for this reform.

Historic Step Forward for American People

After years of rhetoric and stonewalling, this is a huge step forward for the American people.

But I am mindful that this is not the last step. While the vast majority of Republicans in both the House and Senate support term limits, the fact is that this is a constitutional amendment -- we can't do it without substantial Democrat support.

With President Clinton leading the opposition, it appears that no such support exists on the other side of the aisle.

President Clinton not only has consistently opposed term limits -- he even sent his Solicitor General to the United States Supreme Court to argue against the term limits law that passed overwhelmingly in his own state of Arkansas.

President Clinton should drop his opposition to term limits -- and help deliver the Democrat votes necessary to pass the constitutional amendment.

I would also like to share why I think this is important. As someone who has served his country for most of his adult life, I am not one of those who subscribes to the notion that this is about the people who serve in a representative democracy. I know it is fashionable to attack politicians, but the truth is that those elected to represent the people -- at whatever level of government -- reflect both the strengths and weaknesses of the electorate in a thousand different ways.

Strengthening the Bond Between the Elected & Those Represented

What this is about is the institution of representative democracy itself. I believe the notion of a citizen legislator is an honorable one. And I believe that representing your constituents to the best of your abilities is at the core of the success of the "American experiment" over the last 200 years.

Term limits are not an effort to tear down this relationship between those elected and those represented. Instead, term limits are an effort to strengthen that bond.

This issue was not one that many Americans -- let alone legislators -- thought about until recently. I was in fact lukewarm toward the idea some time ago.

But I would like to think that we -- as legislators -- are capable of keeping up with the American people we represent. There clearly is a sense of something going wrong, and we owe it to them, and to future generations to think about whether the comfortable status quo is doing the job.

(more)

Those Who Make Laws Also Live Under Them

For me, it has come down to this:

We are a republic, founded on the rule of law.

There are many ways to define what the rule of law means, but it is the genius of Republican democracy that those who make the laws also live under them. That's what the rule of law means to me.

In some respects, however, we have gotten away from that.

It was only last year -- in a Republican Congress -- that we insisted for the first time that all those laws that applied to the private sector had to apply to Congress as well.

And, after much reflection, it seems to me that it is probably a good thing that a legislator know that the laws he or she helps enact are going to affect them too. When legislators leave Congress to start a business or to do whatever, they will have to bear the consequences of those actions in a way that they may be insulated from if they serve 15, 20, or 30 years in Congress.

Now, obviously, I feel like I understand these consequences, and I'll bet most of my colleagues do too. But, studies that show that the longer a legislator spends in Congress, the more readily he or she spends taxpayers' money, suggest that this is not always the case.

In such situations, I think it is wise to rely on the good sense of the American people. They are the ones most affected, and that brings me to my final point on why I support a constitutional amendment.

Let the American People Decide

The very nature of the process surrounding a constitutional amendment is that we let the people decide. Issues that go to the core of our republican institutions are properly the province of the people.

All we do when we pass a resolution on a constitutional amendment is allow the people in all of the states to decide -- and, in fact, three fourths of those states have to decide in the affirmative before an amendment becomes part of our Constitution.

As I have said before, the federal government of today is not the same as that envisioned by our founders. We need to dust off the 10th amendment, and return power back to the states and to the people.

I say, give those we represent this opportunity to debate, consider and decide. It is particularly appropriate that we do so, when the issue before us goes to the core of the relationship between those elected and those represented. This is not an issue we should decide alone.

There should be no mistake about the importance of the vote today. The vote today is about whether we move forward and give the people the opportunity to make that choice.

As with other constitutional amendments, you don't always succeed the first time. Nor should we necessarily. Constitutional amendments almost always involve great issues.

But in state after state, the American people have already indicated their views on term limits. A vote today to end debate and move toward final passage is a vote to take the American people at their word and build momentum for support.

I urge my colleagues to vote to end debate and support allowing the American people we represent the opportunity to choose for themselves.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 3:00 p.m.