

Political Reform: A Change to the United States System

by Jason Powers, August 2003

I never espoused to the whole idea of political office being a good civic duty to harness for an entire lifetime. Yet many, once they reach the minimally required age limits, do make the procession to the arena of politics to make a long career of campaigning on behalf of the public interest solely for a title and an office. Their ideas are rarely unique. Their preaching is mostly on the same platforms established by other once-successful politicians in long-established political parties. Their best ideas even come from influential persons that are long dead, yet brought to life in the choosing of once-catchy phrases from ancient speeches which these new career politicians make into trite speeches while examining their electorate's demographics in order to win elections. After this, the amount of actual change for the better sought is dependent on a variety of factors which can be all be traced back to one motivation: money to the candidate or the party's political machine.

I am not hear to berate the political mechanisms and the good-buddy system developed to advance the careers of the select few who make it – namely those from a good family name in a local area or just a wealthy descendent whose money and prestige won him (or her) many friends (some specious at best) in their life – but to point to an alternative. I realize a few of those leaders do make good on promises made, however, once again the book turns to many that bowed down to influential organizations (with big money), big business (with even bigger money), or radical groups (with more marginal votes). I wish that was also different because the current lobbying process undermines the idea of all men being created equal, except for those with more money, pedigree, or affluence backing them to their selfish ends.

The conscience of men should not be bought and sold like in the days of slaves. And so, a national referendum should be made to limit all service in all political areas to 12 years total (not including last term.) That would include service in all municipalities, local, state, and federal governments. An example could look like this:

- 1) State senator – 2 years
- 2) Mayor – 4 years
- 3) U.S Representative – 4 years
- 4) President – 4 years

The overall length of service could be longer than 12 years, but last term of office must begin before the 12th year started. No additional time could be given to this person if they do receive a reelection nod. In this way, so many individuals now situated in key positions will not become these abstract monoliths of power on this nation's Capitol Hill or a local stronghold of subversive power. I would also propose that after 10 years out of office a person could renew this process and the time duration of service would be an additional 12 years. This is the only compromise I would be willing to add. (We limit the President to two 4-year terms.)

The reason for this is to make way for new leaders whose vision is not so clouded in the purpose of just getting reelected, forming election coalitions, or making contacts with more powerful individuals. I realize we need good leaders with experience; ones with high moral character; ones with background on issues; ones with strong attitudes towards their electorate; but at what time did we believe that 25 to 50 years of servicing persons solely through election, committee and title helps?

I believe that everyone needs to diversify and realize that their powers of good can be spread in more avenues and with greater focus if they approach life without a solitary and singular devotion in the political realm. And not all these elected officials serve our best interests - whether they can ever say so or not. New leaders promote new ideas and foster change where needed, even if their experiences with certain persons is lacking or that the primary problem needing a solution takes years to solve. (Maybe they should only focus on that primary problem instead of skating on to a better position in politics.)

It may also be said it takes ten years to accomplish many tasks. Well, I am giving you twelve. If that does not help, then after a ten-year hiatus, twelve more are available. In the meantime, prior professions, charitable foundations, representing diplomatic (non-elected) or humanitarian needs are just a few ways to bide time if politics is the sole calling of that individual.

The reasons to serve should not be born out of the obsession to build title for self, family, friends, or to trumpet for only the wealthiest people, largest radical voter block, or biggest campaign contributor. They should be born out of the necessity to provide answers to local dilemmas, state catastrophes, federal crisis, and humanity causes in all arenas of this purpose called life. And all this can be done in more ways than in politics.