

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2001-02

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on
Campaigns &
Elections
(AC-CE)**

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

Published Documents

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

**

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

➤ **01hr_ajr0009_AC-CE_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **



BOB ZIEGELBAUER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • TWENTY FIFTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Committee on Campaigns & Elections
Representative Stephen Freese, Chair
Thursday, March 15, 2001
9:00 a.m. – 415 NW
Support for AJR 9

Mr. Chairman and Members:

Thank you for scheduling this hearing on AJR 9 and for your consideration of it.

AJR 9 is a straight-forward proposal to change the State Constitution, providing for a term limit of 12 consecutive years *in any one office* for members of the Legislature and for the Governor and other State Constitutional offices.

As we all know, changing the Wisconsin State Constitution is a difficult and lengthy procedure that not only requires passage by both Houses of two consecutive Legislatures but also the agreement of the voters in a statewide referendum as the final stop. Today's hearing is but a tiny first baby step in that process.

This resolution was drafted narrowly, dealing only with state offices, and is consistent with the recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings that states cannot impose term limits on their Congressional delegations.

Obviously there are a number of alternative term limit approaches available; many are much more restrictive than this one.

The proposal is also a very moderate one, allowing 12 years of consecutive service in any one office, even allowing return to that office after two years off, and applying the 12 year limit to only one office. For those currently serving, the 12 year clock would start running on the effective date of the change.

The issue is not new. Presently, 38 states have some type of term limit for their elected officials. Of these 38 states, 19 have created or expanded term limits over the last decade.

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Term limits are clearly an issue that the people understand and have strong feelings about. Opinion polls have consistently shown overwhelming support for the concept, with upwards of 70% in favor, sometimes much higher.

And, for what it's worth, I have surveyed my constituents in the 25th Assembly District on this issue several times in the past few years. Each time, well over two-thirds of the respondents favored a 12 year term limit.

Although there are many familiar and strong arguments both for and against the concept, in my view the most important one is that the people clearly favor term limits, and I believe that they know very well why. They understand the system and the power of the status quo.

They continue to want change. I believe we have a duty to be responsive to that desire by allowing this kind of proposal to be exposed to the process.

Beyond that, I would add that proposals like these should not be seen as criticism of tenured legislators who have served this state with distinction, but rather a reflection of the change that has occurred in our society and a different set of expectations that the people have of their elected representatives. For those looking to make a career in public service, a 12 year limit of consecutive service in one office will still provide more than ample opportunity, as well as the time, to gain the experience necessary to be effective.

During a time when we are actively deliberating serious and substantive proposals to reform campaign finance law and considering using the people's tax money to fund our own political campaigns, I believe the issue of term limits deserves some serious consideration. Despite the overwhelming opposition to term limits among us, the political class, we do well to at least discuss this issue. That's why I especially appreciate this hearing today.

I would hope that the Committee would continue the debate on this issue that the people of our State have a deep interest in by advancing this proposal for a committee vote – so that it might continue to draw the public discussion, deliberation, and attention that it deserves.

Thank you again for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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