



DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20TH DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Joint Resolution 75

Senate Joint Resolution 75 represents a simple concept. The proposed constitutional amendment would limit members of the legislature to 12 years of service in the same legislative body and would limit the governor and lieutenant governor to 8 years of office in the same office. Current elected officials have nothing to fear. The term limits would not apply to the office one holds on the date of ratification of the proposed constitutional amendment.

The idea of term limits is not a new one. In a letter to Edmund Pendleton in 1776, Thomas Jefferson opined, “[his] reason for fixing them in office for a term of years rather than for life, was that they might have an idea that they were at a certain period to return into the mass of the people and become the governed instead of the governor which might still keep alive that regard to the public good that otherwise they might perhaps be induced by their independence to forget.”

While this building has recently experienced its share of turnover, historically too many individuals have no desire to “return into the mass of the people and become the governed.” This is not meant as an attack on any individual public servant, but merely a result of human nature. It is simply too enticing to remain a member of the governing class than to voluntarily step aside.

By enacting this simple reform, Wisconsin would be joining 15 other states which limit terms in office. And relative to these other states, this reform represents the most liberal standard. Of the 15 states which impose term limits, several limit legislative service in both chambers to just 12 years. Michigan allows for only 14 years of total legislative service and Arkansas for only 16 years. This resolution would generously allow for 24 years of total legislative service, a number which does not even account for time one could potentially serve as Lieutenant Governor and Governor.

Creating a limit on the number of terms a legislator can serve allows for positive turnover and for new citizen legislators to serve their state. These new citizen legislators would bring innovative ideas to the Capitol. In the process it would also create a stronger connection to the private sector and the “real world” solutions that need to take a more prominent role in public policy discussions. Career politicians lack the experience of maintaining a consistent job outside the legislature and hinders a diverse field of lawmakers, thereby narrowing the viewpoints represented in the building.

Term limits can bring new perspectives, allow for frequent legislative turnover, and require legislators to move forward with their ideas for creating a better Wisconsin. I support a return to government by citizen legislators and ask that you join me in our liberty movement.



Bob Gannon

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 58th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Joint Resolution 75

February 4, 2016

Testimony from Rep. Gannon

Good morning and thank you Chair and members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Joint Resolution 75, a bill which would impose term limits on the Governor, Lt. Governor, Senate members and Assembly members.

Term limits is an idea of which 75% of Americans support. They see legislators who have served for long periods of time as being controlled by lobbyists and special interest. Currently 15 States have term limits for their legislators and 37 states have term limits for their Governors. These limitations allow for new members to be elected to the government and to bring new and fresh ideas to the chambers.

The Wisconsin Legislature has changed how it runs itself over the past several decades. Between the years of 1963-1985 it averaged 29 new members per session, but between 1985-2007 they averaged 19. In 1977 the average age of Senators was 43 and Representatives were 42, but in 2007 the averages jumped to 55 and 50. In 1961 the assembly met 185 days, the senate 184, but in 2005 the senate met 69 days and the assembly met 72 days; spending less time debating bills on the floor to move Wisconsin forward, spending that time getting reelected, among other things.

In the 1970's the legislature averaged 2,273 bills introduced per session; since 1991 it has averaged 1,697 or 25% fewer. In the 2007 Session: Freshman avg. 5.9 bills, those in office 4 years avg. 8.9 bills, those in office 6 years avg. 10.6 bills, those in office 8 years avg. 13 bills, those in office 10 years avg. 7.6 bills, those in office 12 years avg. 9.7 bills (only a sample size of 3), those in office more than 12 years avg. 4.5 bills (20 members in this sample). This shows that as legislators are here longer they become less productive than those who are here less than 10-12 years and are unlikely to lose their seat to a challenger and legislators are aware of that fact.

Governor Walker called for 12 year limits on the US House and Senate; he "self imposes them" by only serving no more than 10 years in his previous elected positions. Jeb Bush said term limits in FL lead to a "significantly higher quality" legislature, as younger members and more women were elected, bringing more energy and viewpoints to the legislature. One of those young members was Marco Rubio, who also backs term limits. Since Florida members can only serve 8 years per house before they have to leave, it allowed young Rubio a chance to run for office before age 30. If not for term limits, he would have faced an incumbent with 15 or 25 years of service and would have likely lost that election as incumbents rarely lose their seats.

Term limits can allow new minds an opportunity to present fresh ideas to the Wisconsin Legislature and allow for a better Wisconsin. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.