



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO

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Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission
Committee on the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch
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Thank you for this opportunity to share the League's thoughts with you.

The League of Women Voters has formally opposed limitations on terms since the early 1990's. In its simplest form the rationale is that terms are already limited to either 2 or 4 years and incumbents already face the voters at the end of their terms. Preventing an incumbent from running for reelection after a certain number of terms could deprive voters of their candidate of choice.

The Ohio ballot in 1992 contained three issues placed on the ballot by initiative pertaining to limits on terms. The issues proposed limiting the number of terms for the General Assembly, for executive offices other than Governor, and for US Congress. The League of Women Voters of Ohio wrote the "con" arguments for all three.

The main "pro" arguments were:

- Executive offices (Governor and President) were already limited in the number of terms
- Incumbents could return to the same office after a four year "rest period"
- Voting incumbents out was difficult because elections were not competitive and term limits would produce more "open seat" elections
- Term limits would bring elected officeholders closer in touch with the electorate they serve
- Term limits would create more balanced elections which would enable more Ohioans to serve in public office

The main "con" arguments were:

- Term limits would ensure more lame duck legislators who can't face the voters again
- Competition would be lessened because competitors would prefer to wait and run for an open seat
- Term limits will produce legislators with less experience and less institutional memory
- Staff, bureaucrats and lobbyists will become more powerful
- Short-term office holders will adopt short-term solutions to long-term problems

After 14 years of experience with term limits most of the “cons” have proved true. The League continues to oppose limitations on the number of consecutive terms an incumbent may serve in the General Assembly.

Unfortunately one of the “pro” arguments remains. In 1992 a persistent argument for limitations on the number of consecutive terms that could be served in the General Assembly was the inability to remove unpopular incumbents and the lack of competitive elections. Voters still feel that frustration. This Committee is wise to look at redistricting reform as well as extending the number of consecutive years a member of the General Assembly may serve. Voters may well look more favorably on extending term limits if redistricting reform has given them more ability to have representatives that reflect their political values and a greater ability to influence the outcome of races by having more competitive districts.