

Testimony of Katherine Clark
General Government Committee, Ohio Senate
Columbus, Ohio
Legislative Hearing on SJR3

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the committee, my name is Katherine Clark. I am from Bowling Green, Ohio, Senate District 2.

Our system for electing members of Congress was intended by the Founders to operate like a free-market system, in the sense that legislators who served the people well could be reelected, while those who performed poorly would be voted out. The Founders never envisioned career legislators.

As proof, throughout the 1800s the norm was for members of Congress to serve just 1 or 2 terms. From 1850 to 1898 half of Congress was replaced every election cycle.¹ Today 9 out of every 10 members of Congress who run for reelection win.² This might be reasonable if Congress were 90% popular with the American people. However, according to the February 2025 Gallup Poll, the approval rating is only 29%, and that is markedly high.³

Why can't these American people get the highly unpopular members of Congress replaced? The answer is that incumbents have unfair advantages that bias elections in their favor.

- Incumbents enjoy at least a 4-to-1 fundraising advantage.⁴
- Incumbents can leverage political patronage.
- Incumbents usually have better-established campaign infrastructures.
- And the ability to hold official events or town hall meetings, favors incumbents.

Simply said, the deck is stacked in favor of incumbents. It is a wonder that Congress was able to reach this stunning 29% approval rating having been able to send home only slightly more 3% of its members.⁵

¹ Levin, Mark R. *The Liberty Amendments*. Simon and Schuster, 2013, page 27.

² <https://www.termlimits.com/why-term-limits/>

³ [Trump's Job Approval Rating at 45%; Congress' Jumps to 29%](#)

⁴ Brooks, David. "Party All the Time." *The New York Times*, April 3, 2014.

⁵ [Reelection Rates Over the Years • OpenSecrets](#)

The problems that have plagued our Country for decades; crippling problems like our national debt, immigration policy, unfunded entitlement programs, never seem to get fixed partly because the politicians who have either created them or have failed to correct them continue to stay in office.

As the 22nd amendment to the Constitution places term limits on the president, it is now time for an amendment that places term limits on the US Congress, or even agency heads or other federal officials.

Term limits would see new perspectives, fresh ideas, and novel solutions to our nation's aging perpetual problems. Legislators would return home to live under laws they passed or the problems they failed to solve. Term limits would incentivize members of Congress to think twice about paparazzi opinions and empower them to make the tough decisions that create lasting solutions.

The concern that term limits on Congress could backfire if the period of service is too short was reflected in the results of an Article V Convention of States simulation that occurred in August of 2023 with actual state legislators as delegates. In that simulation, term limits proposed were 18 years for the House and 18 years for the Senate, with maximum length of service set at 24 years for combined service in both chambers. 24 years seems long enough if delegates to the real convention come up with a similar amendment proposal for the states to consider for ratification.

In closing, placing term limits on Congress through an amendment to the Constitution would turn what are now Vocational legislators into Citizen legislators. I, along with about 117,000 other Ohio petition signers, ask you to support passage of SJR3.

Thank you.