

CHAPTER TWO: TERMS OF FEDERALLY ELECTED OFFICES

By Joe Venuti

Myriad reasons why this system has to change: career politicians not intended by founders; House Reps spend their entire 2-year terms running for re-election. Spend millions of dollars campaigning for a 2-year job that pays \$174,000 per year? Senators spend at least last 2 years of their terms campaigning for re-election. Presidents generally act differently in their first terms than in their second term.

Proposal: all federally elected offices (House, Senate, and Pres/VP) will be ONE six-year term. Cannot succeed themselves. No person holding any of these offices may campaign for any office while holding the office to which they were elected. They must spend the entire 6 years doing the job they were elected to do. Must wait a minimum of two years after the full term he/she was elected to before running again for any federal office. Must wait 12 years before accepting job as lobbyist.

The Senate now elects one third of its members every two years. This is good because it allows for some consistency between successive congresses, with two thirds of the members continuing, and only one third coming in as new senators. I would apply the same method to the House, and further, that within each state with more than three representatives, one-third in each state shall be elected in any given year. Alternative schedules would be applied to states with one or two representatives.

This system would accomplish several things. It would cause people to pursue their own careers, not careers as professional politicians. It would also force every federally elected person to spend all of his term doing the job he was elected to do. If any person in any of these positions did such an outstanding job representing his constituents, then surely everyone would support him whenever he was eligible to run for another (or the same) office later on.

ELECTION REFORMS:

Election day in the US is prescribed to be held on a Tuesday. Many European countries hold their elections on a Sunday, and some conduct their elections over 2 days, including a Sunday. They typically have a much higher percent of their registered voters participate in their elections than we do. You can draw your own conclusions as to whether the “weekend” voting allows and encourages more people to vote in these elections. My opinion is that it does; and, that our elections are held on Tuesday specifically for preventing or discouraging certain groups of people from voting. I propose a Saturday/Sunday election period for our elections. I feel it would result in many more people voting in all the elections. As an aside, using public

schools as polling places can easily accommodate elections held on the weekends. It would also open the opportunity to be a poll worker to many more people.

CAMPAIGNS: this country is totally controlled by large corporations. We need to end that process, and get back to having the people in control of this country and our elections. I propose prohibiting corporations from spending any money, directly or indirectly, to influence any elections. I also propose that the same restrictions be placed on any organized labor organizations (unions). Nothing would prevent any persons working for corporations or in labor unions from participating on an individual basis.

I would limit the total amount of money that any candidate could spend on his election, whether that money came from donations from other individuals, or from his own resources. We could create a formula connecting the amount of money spent in a campaign to the salary that person would receive during his tenure in office. And, as in many other countries, the government should mandate that the TV networks give equal time to all qualified candidates.

I also propose limiting the time period for campaigning for the election. Many countries limit their campaigning to 2 or 3 months. I propose a 6-month maximum for federal offices, 4-month max for state offices, and 2-month max for local offices.

PRIMARY:

Imagine this scenario: In the state of Florida, two candidates are seeking the nomination of their party for governor. One week, they have a primary election in Miami (Dade County); the next week, they have another primary in Tampa (Hillsboro County); a week later, Jacksonville; a week later, Tallahassee, etc, etc, etc. Sounds really ridiculous, doesn't it?

The primary system for president is operated exactly that way. Every other primary for office in the country at every level of government is held on one day.

The politicians and the big-money resources totally control the current system by scheduling primaries on different dates spread out all over the calendar. This allows early winners to garner money to use on subsequent primaries, until the big money finally singles out one candidate. Again, as in most of my proposals, the power is returned to the people, and removed from the powerful few.

Simply put, a single national primary by each party should be held in all states on the same day, and the winner becomes the nominee. Second place person becomes the vice-presidential nominee. In 2008, Rudy Giuliani would have won the national primary for

the GOP with Mike Huckabee as VP, and Hillary Clinton for the Dems, with Barack Obama running for VP.

All candidates for president would declare by a certain date, then, all have 3 months to campaign anywhere in the country they choose. Spending on the campaign would be limited for fairness, and television would be required to distribute coverage of all candidates equally.