

Opening Remarks to Senate Judiciary Subcommittee

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and senators for providing me an opportunity to address this important issue.

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are an employer, and you've got some problems with your employees. When you hired these employees, they promised they would do exactly what you asked of them. But once they got the job, they became a nightmare.

They stopped listening to you and started using this job to line their own pockets.

They took the company credit card and racked up more debt than you could pay back.

They became so obsessed with KEEPING their jobs that they FORGOT to **DO** their jobs.

And after all that failure, all that disappointment, all that incompetence...

Your employees came to you and said: "We deserve a raise."

If you are a reasonable person, that should make your blood boil.

And yet, that is exactly what it feels like to be an American taxpayer. The first three words in our Constitution are "We the People." It's written larger than anything else. Because the framers of that document, the architects of our Republic, wanted to remind you, at all times, who is in charge. We the People. We are your employers and you have an obligation to listen to us.

I come to you with a message from the American people: we demand term limits for members of Congress.

In fact, according to the last five national polls on this issue, 82 percent of Americans want term limits. That includes support from 89 percent of Republicans, 76 percent of Democrats and 83 percent of independents. This is not a left or right issue; this is an American issue. In fact, term limits could be the only issue with support from both President Trump *and* President Obama.

Now there was a time about 25 years ago when Congress was debating this. Nearly every opponent of term limits up here had the same rebuttal: experience, experience, experience. We need experience to do this job right. If only you leave your Congress member in office for decades on end, he or she will become such a policy expert that all our problems will be solved!

In hindsight, that was one of the worst predictions ever. This system is broken. Congress has given us 22 trillion dollars in debt. The longest war in American history. A broken healthcare system. A broken immigration system. A tax code written by lobbyists. An

explosion of money in politics. Worst of all, too few here have the courage to solve these problems, because the only focus is on getting re-elected.

That's why it comes as no surprise that Congress has a 14 percent approval rating and 60 percent of Americans say they'd fire every member of Congress if they could.

Unfortunately, elections alone cannot fix this problem. Not because voters love you guys so much, but due to the nearly unbreakable power of incumbency. At the same time members of Congress publicly claim elections are free and fair, they secretly exploit every advantage to keep power.

Incumbents get 9 dollars in special interest money for every dollar that goes to a challenger.

And if incumbents are having difficulty raising money? Not to worry. They're allowed to send campaign-style mailers at taxpayer expense.

That's to say nothing of all the free media and name recognition politicians naturally get just for being in office.

The incumbent advantage creates barriers to entry for everyday Americans without the connections to fund a campaign. It's the case for term limits. Elections may in theory be capable of dethroning incumbents, but that isn't how it works in the real world. Congressional incumbents have a 98 percent re-election rate.

This probably explains why Congress looks more like a country club than a melting pot. It's predominantly made up of lawyers and politicians...and is disproportionately old, white, rich and male. Term limits would give us a legislature that better reflects the diversity of our society.

The message incumbents send to young people like me seems to be "we want you just close enough to the political process to help us win; but don't get too close and take our jobs."

The American people have lost confidence in Congress, and for good reason.

We routinely see abuses of power. 18 months ago it was revealed that members of Congress were secretly using taxpayer money to settle lawsuits – some for sexual harassment. You still haven't disclosed how our money was spent and on whose behalf.

So term limits is a check on arrogance, it is a check on incumbency and it is a check on power. It is a way to restore political courage while bringing fresh faces and ideas to Washington.

As Benjamin Franklin said "In free governments the rulers are the servants, and the people their superiors and sovereigns. For the rulers to return among the people was not to degrade but to promote them."

Here's the dilemma we face: over 80 percent of Americans want term limits to happen. Donald Trump and Barack Obama want it. It is being blocked purely by the self-interest of

Congress. If this were a trial, you all would have to recuse yourselves, because you have a colossal conflict of interest. If term limits pass, you won't stay in the limelight forever. And some people might even stop laughing at your jokes. You'll have to become...ordinary citizens.

And that is the entire point. We are asking you to do what's right and listen to the people you represent.

It's time to bring the gravy train into the station, end the reign of career politicians and give Congress back to the people. Please support Senate Joint Resolution 1 for term limits.