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Matt Caldwell: Expand popular term limits to all seats

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These days there seem to be so many political issues upon which people cannot agree. The chasm seems to grow ever wider on issues ranging from monetary policy and education reform, to health care and military action.

However, one issue that consistently achieves greater than two-thirds support by voters across the spectrum is term limits. In fact, when Florida enacted the eight-year term limits on state government in 1992, it passed with around 70 percent of the vote.

Naysayers will point to the fact that the Founders considered, and rejected, proposals to limit the terms of federal representatives. Yet much has changed since that time, including capping the House at 435 members, the direct election of the Senate, and the limiting of terms of the president.

Most importantly though, our nation suffers from a lack of character in many of those who want to represent us. Take the decision of George Washington to reject a third term or even lifetime appointment to the presidency.

Now contrast that with the antics of folks like Rep. Anthony Weiner or Rep. Mark Foley.

Power is a corrupting influence and association with power should be limited and brief in order to avoid confusing the sovereignty lent out by the voters with a mandate to rule. Incumbency is a powerful and possibly dangerous thing. I wrote previously about the Scott Brown election in Massachusetts as a case study in how the power of incumbency warps engagement by the voters. It is for all these reasons that I have been a consistent advocate for term limits at every level of government. It is also why I proposed, and passed out of the Florida House, a memorial to Congress urging them to submit to the states an amendment to limit their own terms.

Locally, there is continued talk of term limits for the board of county commissioners. With some current board members entering their third decade in office, I expect that issue will receive more attention as time goes on. Additionally, an active effort to place eight-year term limits on the ballot for the city of Fort Myers is currently under way. As I am not a resident of the city, I do not have a vote on that change, but if you want to support that effort, you can find the petition at TermLimitsFM.homestead.com.

Term limits alone are not a panacea for poor character and they certainly cannot stand alone without other good features, such as single-member districting found in state and federal office and electing executive authority, such as the offices of president and governor.

If you are a supporter of these concepts, then you happen to find yourself in company with the majority of your fellow citizens.

If you are not, then I encourage you to strongly weigh the positive benefits and reconsider your position.