

Charter Review Commission
White Paper on Term Limits
November 2004 – First Draft

BACKGROUND

A largely underestimated component of the term limits movement is local limits. At the municipal level, term limits have spread silently but steadily across the country. From Florida to Alaska, from New York to California, over 58 million Americans live in localities with limits of various sorts, and more than 17,000 politicians serve in 2,890 term limited cities, counties and towns. Virtually everywhere voters are given the chance, they pass measures to limit the terms of city officials.

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INFORMATION

1. Eight of the 10 most populous cities in America have term limits.
2. The most common length of service is eight years.
3. At least 58 million people live under municipal term limits.
- 4.

City	Pop.	Year	Limited	Limits	Method of Limitation	% of Vote in Favor	% of Vote Opp.	# of Votes in Favor	# of Votes Opp.
Baker City	9,140	1986	mayor, council	2 terms (2 yr. terms)	charter amend.	75.5%	24.5%	1,711	556
Florence	5,162	1988	mayor, council	mayor: 6 consec. terms (2 yr. terms); council: 3 consec. terms (4 yr. terms)	charter amend.	76.5%	23.5%	900	276
Hillsboro	37,520	1972	mayor, council	2 consec. terms (4 yr. terms)	charter amend.	72.2%	27.8%	3,356	1,295
Lake Oswego	30,576	1976	mayor, council	2 consec. terms (4 yr. terms)	charter amend.	62.1%	37.9%	5,561	3,393
Milwaukie	18,692	*	mayor, council	2 terms (4 yr. terms)	charter	*	*	*	*
Oregon City	11,081	1892	commissioners	2 terms (4 yr. terms)	charter	thought to be part of original charter	n/a	n/a	n/a
Philomath	2,983	1986	council	5 consec. terms (2 yr. terms); council: 4 years in succession (various lengths of terms)	charter amend.	75.4%	24.6%	617	201
Stayton	5,011	1993	mayor, council	mayor: 3 consec. terms (2 yr. terms); council: 2 consec. terms (4 yr. terms)	charter amend.	80.6%	19.4%	1,802	434
Sutherlin	5,020	1988	planning commission, budget committee	panning commission: 2 consec. terms (4 yr. terms); budget committee: 2 consec. terms (3 yr. terms)	ordinance passed by council	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Tigard	29,334	1982	mayor, council	2 consec. terms (4 yr. terms)	charter amend.	83.1%	16.9%	5,521	1,119

PROS

1. High level of support when presented to voters
2. Fresh voices for elected positions
- 3.

CONS

1. Loss of experience
2. Inexperienced elected officials
- 3.

Released by U.S. Term Limits: January 22, 2001

Q: In 1992, Oregon voters approved an initiative that placed term limits on the state legislature, so that no one can serve more than 6 years in the State House of Representatives or more than 8 years in the State Senate. If you had the chance to vote on the same initiative today, would you vote for or against placing these term limits on the state legislature?

71.3% For Term Limits

21.3% Against Term Limits

07.5% Undecided

Q: Some State Legislators are proposing changes to the term limits law. While the voter-approved law allows legislators to serve only 6 years in the State House or 8 years in the State Senate, the legislators' proposal would let politicians stay in office longer, up to 12 years in the House or 12 years in the Senate. Which term limits do you prefer, 6 and 8-year limits or 12-year limits?

68.5% Prefer 6 and 8 Years

25.0% Prefer 12 Years

06.5% Undecided

Q: Do you think members of the legislature want longer limits because they truly believe it is better public policy, or do they simply want to stay in power longer?

19.3% Better Public Policy

65.0% Stay in Power Longer

15.8% Undecided

Q: Do you want your legislator to vote for the current 6 and 8-year term limits or for the longer 12-year term limits?

69.3% 6 and 8 Years

24.8% 12 Years

06.0% Undecided

Q: On the whole, do you think term limits on the state legislature has been a good thing for state government in Oregon, or a bad thing for state government?

65.0% Good

13.5% Bad

21.5% Undecided

This survey was conducted on January 16, 2001, by Basswood Research, a national opinion research company. The sample size was 400, the margin of error is +/- 4.9%.