



A Limited Future

by Grover G. Norquist

be closed. Clinton swore up and down that he was not giving in to terrorism, now defined as domestic far-right extremism. No, he was giving in to the Secret Service, which was giving in to terrorism. Or perhaps he believed all those *Washington Post* stories warning of terrorists in the heartland, angry white men inflamed by the rhetoric of the new Republican majority in Congress. In any event, closing Pennsylvania Avenue had a political dimension: it was another step in Clinton's post-Oklahoma City positioning, recasting himself as a beleaguered leader fighting the forces of darkness. And no Republican leader would come out and say that Clinton was wrong to close off Pennsylvania Avenue.

The decision seemed particularly odd in light of some of Clinton's own behavior as president. In his first months in office, he insisted on taking long, Little Rock-style jogs through Washington. Accompanied by just a few Secret Service agents, he often ran away from the motorcade that always accompanies the president. He once ran across Constitution Avenue, got caught in traffic, and jogged in place *in the middle of the street* as cars whizzed by on both sides. Another time Clinton was jogging up Pennsylvania Avenue when some nut, yelling that his father was an Arkansas chicken farmer, ran right up to the president and jogged next to him for several yards until Secret Service agents blocked his path. No need for a gun; the guy could easily have stabbed Clinton had he been so inclined. Yet another time, the president stopped to do a few stretching exercises at a light box on another busy downtown street while nervous agents hovered around and traffic zoomed by. All in all, it was astonishingly reckless and dangerous behavior, putting the president in far more danger than he is ever in at the White House.

But this time, after the security review, Clinton listened to the Secret Service and the terror-mongers, and together they turned the White House into a besieged presidential palace. But there's still room for hope. It will undoubtedly take a long time to transform Pennsylvania Avenue into a park. Next year, if the voters get rid of Bill Clinton, perhaps the next president can undo the damage, and give America back its street. □

In May, the Supreme Court struck down the laws of twenty-three states limiting the terms of U.S. senators and congressmen. In a 5-4 decision, the Court invalidated a provision of the Arkansas constitution, adopted by initiative, limiting senators to two six-year terms, and House members to three two-year terms. The Clinton administration cheered the decision, in which its two judicial appointments (Breyer and Ginsburg) concurred. Former House speaker Tom Foley, a longtime target of the term-limits movement, held a press conference to announce, "Term limits is dead."

But they're not. The Supreme Court decision may be a Pyrrhic victory for term-limit foes, for it has already emboldened activists who are seeking to use a constitutional amendment to push through their reform. "This is no longer a debate over whether term limits are a good idea," wrote Norman Leahy, the director of the U.S. Term Limits Foundation. "This is now a question of when term limits will be adopted as part of the Constitution."

On no other issue do Washington and the American people have such divergent views. Representatives and senators have a stake in opposing term limits, but the rest of official Washington is just as strongly opposed, and even more disingenuous. Opponents argue the reform would give power to lobbyists and congressional staff—but those same lobbyists and staffers are the very people opposing term limits most volubly. Under the current system, all power derives from the length of the member's term—it's not *freshmen* who have powerful staff, or long-standing friendships with powerful lobbyists.

Term limits for federal congressmen

Grover G. Norquist is president of Americans for Tax Reform.

were first adopted in Colorado in 1990, through a popular initiative that won 70 percent of the vote. In 1992 thirteen more states passed term limits initiatives. Last year seven other states joined the ranks, and Colorado shortened its limits. In these twenty-one initiative states, more than 24 million votes were cast for term limits. Two states—Utah in 1994 and New Hampshire this year—adopted term limits by action of the legislature.

The activists of the lobbying group U.S. Term Limits have helped to pass them in twenty states for state legislators (see chart opposite), and forty states already have term limits on their governors. (These were not affected by the Supreme Court decision.) In New York City, Ronald Lauder ran a campaign to limit the terms of the mayor and city councilors. Opposed by labor unions, municipal workers, the *New York Times*, and all politicians, limits won with 59 percent of the vote. Even Washington, D.C. passed them in 1994 with 62 percent of the vote. All told, thousands of sheriffs, mayors, and city councilmen will be graduating as a result of term limits, creating an army of challengers at the national level.

That serves one rationale for term limits: unstacking the deck that has favored incumbents. But another, equally serious rationale is limiting the seniority system in Congress, by which powerful committee chairman—like Dan Rostenkowski or Ted Kennedy—become *de facto* representatives for the entire country. It is here that the new GOP Congress has already won half the term-limits battle. In 1993, the House Republican Caucus voted to limit the time that any Republican could serve as a ranking committee member to six years. In 1995, they extended the limit to committee chairmen, which may explain why Bill Archer, chairman of the Ways

and Means Committee, has moved so quickly to abolish the income tax in favor of a retail sales tax—he will be gone in six years. Republicans also put an eight-year term limit on the Speaker of the House—the same limit the president faces. If the Democrats were to re-take the House, they could repeal these limits, but they would pay a heavy price in public outrage.

Many issues elicit strong opinion-poll support that fades away when voters are actually asked to cast a ballot; term limits support has held up under fire. Term limit proponents have thus already won half the war. To win total victory—a constitutional amendment limiting all representatives to three terms and all senators to two terms—U.S. Term Limits and others have several parallel strategies.

Activists plan to hold Senate Majority Leader and presidential candidate Bob Dole to his promise of a vote on term limits, something Congress refused to do until Republicans put it in their Contract With America. (*Roll Call*, the congressional newspaper, has reported that thirty-nine Republicans and four Democrats are publicly committed to limits.) The Senate vote will give activists a target list for the 1996 primaries and November elections.

In 1994, term limit supporters picked up seventy House seats. Passing the amendment would require sixty-one more. The House vote on term limits earlier this year surprised many by exposing Henry Hyde and thirty-five other Republicans as term limits opponents. U.S. Term Limits' sister organization, Americans for Limited Terms, has already received pledges of more than \$8 million for the 1996 campaigns.

The Supreme Court decision has created a term limits version of the National Rifle Association: a political bloc that is well-funded and determined, with a take-no-prisoners attitude. Until an amendment is passed, all candidates will be asked their position on term limits—as they now are asked about abortion, taxes, and gun control. The decision also gives term limits supporters a stake in the next president and his possible appointees to the Supreme Court. Term-limits advocates join property-rights activists, pro-lifers, anti-crime activists, and taxpayer groups in wanting to ensure that the next appointee to the Court respects the Ninth and Tenth Amendments.

Leaders of the amendment drive such

as Howie Rich and Paul Jacob, respectively the president and executive director of U.S. Term Limits, have long understood that their task is more difficult than that of other activists seeking changes such as the balanced-budget amendment. U.S. Term Limits has studied the 17th (direct election of senators) and 19th (women's suffrage) Amendments for ideas on overcoming expected opposition.

The House of Representatives voted two-thirds for direct senatorial elections as early as 1893, but between 1893 and 1902, the House passed the amendment five times only to see the Senate refuse to allow a vote. In 1904 Oregon, which had and still has the initiative process, voted three to one to require that candidates for the state legislature sign one of two public statements. Statement One had the candidate promise to vote "for that candidate for United States Senator in Congress who has received the highest number of the people's votes for that position at the election next preceding the election of a Senator in Congress, without regard to my individual preference."

Statement Two said the legislator would "consider the vote of the people for United States Senator . . . as nothing more than a recommendation which I shall be at liberty to wholly disregard if the reason for doing so seems to me to be sufficient."

(Term limits supporters could require all candidates for federal office to have on the ballot, along with their names and party affiliations, a statement saying either, "I promise to serve only three terms," or "I will not promise to serve only three terms.") In the first Oregon election following this new ballot labeling, the state legislature took only twenty minutes to choose two senators who had won earlier popular primaries. By 1908 twenty-eight states had such mechanisms, and senators were, in effect, popularly elected. In 1912, the 17th Amendment merely ratified a *fait accompli*.

Passage of the 17th Amendment took from 1893 to 1912, just shy of two decades. The women's suffrage amendment took longer—it was first voted on in the Senate in 1887 and not passed until thirty-four years later—but followed the same route of changing the rules in the individual states first. When enough representatives and senators had been elected from states with women voters, they provided the support to pass the national amendment in 1920.

The modern term limits campaign won its first initiative in 1990. It forced a vote in the House in March 1995 and won a majority of the vote, though not the two-thirds it needed. A Senate vote is promised this year. □

20 States with Term Limits on State Legislators

State	Year Limits	% of Vote
Arizona	1992 Legislators: 4 terms (8 years)	63%
Arkansas	1992 House: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	60%
California	1990 Assembly: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	52%
Colorado	1990 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	71%
Florida	1992 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	77%
Idaho	1994 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 4 terms (8 years)	59%
Maine	1993 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 4 terms (8 years)	69%
Mass.	1994 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	51%
Michigan	1992 House: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	59%
Missouri	1992 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	75%
Montana	1992 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	67%
Nebraska	1994 Legislature: 2 terms (8 years)	68%
Nevada	1994 *Assembly: 6 terms (12 years) / Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	70%
Ohio	1992 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	66%
Okla.	1990 Legislature: 12 years combined total for both houses	67%
Oregon	1992 House: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	69%
S. Dakota	1992 House: 4 terms (8 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	63%
Utah	1994 House: 6 terms (12 years) / Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	**
Washington	1992 House: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	52%
Wyoming	1992 House: 3 terms (6 years) / Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	77%

* Subject to a second vote in 1996.

** Passed by state legislature.

Italics indicate states limited by statute. All others are limited by state constitutional amendment.

Louisiana and Mississippi will vote on term limits later this year.

Adapted from a chart by U.S. Term Limits.



Crumb and Crummier

by James Bowman

Val Kilmer has taken the place of Michael Keaton as the Caped Crusader, and we have for the first time in the cinematic redaction of the Batman story a version of Robin the Wonder Boy (Chris O'Donnell). There are two new villains, Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face and Jim Carrey as the Riddler, but otherwise the saga of Batman goes on without missing a beat. Indeed, the title of the latest in the series, *Batman Forever*, directed by Joel Schumacher, begins to sound like a threat. Yet if you look closer, there have been a few changes since *Batman* swept the country in 1989.

The most interesting of these have to do with the depiction of Gotham. Gone is the gloomy, desolate urban landscape. No longer is there the pervasive sense of criminal danger lurking in the shadows. Gotham has undergone the mother of all urban renewals. Now it is gleaming, hi-tech, functional, clean, and sunlit. Everything works. Even the one scene depicting a descent into the supposedly dark underside of the city, where there are villainous looking street toughs and lurid graffiti and fires in barrels in the streets, has the look of designer decay. The glow of neon is all around, and the bad guys dress in Halloween costumes and masks and parodies of evening dress.

Of course the internal logic of the Batman concept has always been at odds with the idea of crime as something engaged in by squalid, solitary sociopaths. Although Batman is supposed to have come to his calling through seeing his parents gunned down by a mere mugger, the criminals

who engage his adult attention are always highly sophisticated, highly organized CEOs of high-tech conglomerates who, like Batman himself, give as much thought to their public images as they do to their criminal lusts. In *Batman Forever*, more than in the earlier films, the organizing principle is symmetry, and what has always been essentially true is now made literally true, namely that a sort of Bad Guys Inc. has been created as a business competitor of Bruce Wayne Industries.

The fact that top executives of both have a taste for fancy dress can be put down to advertising. For the film is all about costuming and packaging and public image. Batman and his enemies both make theatrical entrances and equally theatrical gestures. Two-Face's attack on a circus is advertised by his taking over for the ringmaster and announcing his criminal enterprise as the next act. Likewise, the Riddler, in the climactic scene, plays a game-show host. Even their wicked henchmen are all dressed in leather jumpsuits and weirdly zippered hoods. The Riddler is shown agonizing over what to call himself and the costume he will adopt. When Batman appears after Two-Face has crashed yet another high society party, the Riddler says to his partner: "Your entrance was good. His was better."

Dr. Chase Meridian (Nicole Kidman), love interest of Batman/Bruce Wayne, comments on Batman's entrance in the opening section of the film. She also serves as on-site psychologist to elucidate the hidden motives of both heroes and villains and their weird penchant for secret identities. Though androgynously named and in other respects a new Hollywood woman with a profession and a taste for working out with the

heavy bag, Dr. Chase always appears in slinky, feminine dresses, and she ultimately needs Batman to save her life. What she manages to make clear, even without using her credentials in psychology, is that underneath *Batman Forever's* glossy camp is a classic male fantasy.

Thus the film itself may be said to be wearing a disguise. The irony implied by its exaggeration of the super-hero trappings is itself ironic—a double bluff. It really is about bashing bad guys, rescuing fair maidens, and playing with hi-tech toys, all of which are ingredients in traditional male fantasy. And it is the fantasy, not the tongue in the cheek, that makes it a commercial proposition.

In order to find its audience, female fantasy of the sort that we find in *The Bridges of Madison County* does not need to disguise itself so carefully. The most interesting thing about this film is the way in which Richard LaGravenese's script and Clint Eastwood's direction have done wonders with Robert James Waller's novel, cutting down its vast jungles of poison-flowery prose and leaving the outlines of the fantasy standing stark and simple against the flat Iowa landscape. It is still a banality (this housewife is said to have "dreams" that her husband, decent guy though he is, has been unable to fulfill, but we are never told what they are) pumped up with atmospherics, just like the novel—but the atmosphere is a little more breathable than in the novel.

This is also because Eastwood partly turns away from the affair between Robert Kincaid (played by Eastwood himself) and Francesca Johnson (Meryl Streep) and pays more attention to the framing device of its discovery after her

James Bowman is American editor of the Times Literary Supplement and movie critic of *The American Spectator*.