



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo's Weekly Column: Term limits can 'fundamentally and dramatically change the culture of Albany'

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO January 29, 2018

| ISSUE: **TERM LIMITS**



The 22nd Amendment, which was ratified in 1951, states, in part, that “no person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice.” The amendment came after Franklin Delano Roosevelt served 13 years as President of the United States.

While there are now term limits for the President, there aren't any for members of Congress. Here in New York, the governor, legislators and other elected officials at the state level aren't limited in how long they can serve.

During my time in the Senate, I have been a sponsor of legislation, which has passed the Senate several times, that would create eight-year term limits for leadership positions in the Senate and Assembly. In the spirit of government reform, my bill builds upon the voluntary term limits that are already in place in Senate rules - at my request and advocacy - that limits the number of years a member can serve as a leader or committee chair, and further applies these limits to both bodies of the full State Legislature.

Further, I also have sponsored legislation that would amend the state's constitution and limit the tenures of the Governor, state Comptroller, Attorney General and members of the Legislature. This legislation proposes that the Governor, Comptroller and Attorney General can only serve two terms, while legislators would be restricted to six, two-year terms.

The Assembly, however, hasn't taken any action on my bills relating to term limits.

If you want to fundamentally and dramatically change the culture of Albany, I believe that you need to limit the amount of time our elected officials are in office. Imposing term limits will regularly shake up the makeup of state government, which will force change and reinvigorate the legislative process by bringing in new faces and fresh ideas. There are plenty of compelling concepts being proposed that are worth examining to restore trust in government, but real ethics reform must begin with term limits.

Simply put, if an eight-year term limit is enough for the President of the United States, it's ample time for the Speaker of the Assembly, Senate President or a legislative committee chair. It's the most logical and effective way to change the culture of Albany and choke back the temptation of abusing power.

I've championed term limits since my election in 2006, a move that has not always made me popular with my colleagues. I can live with that, because leadership is about principles, not popularity, and establishing real trust can only come from bringing about real, substantive change.