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**March 2002**

According to Randall Gnant, President of the Arizona Senate, applying term limits in Arizona was not necessary since almost a third of all legislative seats turned over every two years. He believes term limits have led to a decline in civility in the legislative process, a decline in institutional memory and an erosion of representative government, increased power to the un-elected bureaucracy and the rise of free agency among members.

He further states that while there has always been substantial turnover in members and leadership every two years in Arizona, Arizona still had several members who, prior to term limits, had spent lengthy careers in public service. Gnant feels that while cynics would say that such long-term service by a handful of members is harmful, the exact opposite is true. Such service helps provide institutional memory and knowledge that is valuable in the legislative process. For example, like many states, Arizona is experiencing its first economic slowdown since the early 1990s. According to Gnant, there are only eight Senators who have been through similar economic times and have experience in balancing a budget with slowing revenues. There is not a single member of the Arizona House of Representatives that has voted on a budget that does not foresee increasing revenues and large budget surpluses.

**The full article, "Term Limits Not Necessary," appears in the Fall 2001 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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Shane Broadway, Arkansas' Speaker of the House, states that term limit laws in Arkansas have been neither the panacea proclaimed by supporters, nor have they wrought the destruction predicted by naysayers. Term limits have opened the door for younger, fresher faces with, hopefully, some new ideas.

Broadway reflects on the consequences of implementing term limits in Arkansas. A foreseen consequence of term limits has been House members seeking Senate seats as they are vacated, and term-limited constitutional officers running for another constitutional office.

An unforeseen effect of term limits has been felt in redistricting plans this year, as the state Board of Apportionment attempts to redraw district lines based on the 2000 Census. The process has opened new districts and created vacant seats where none before existed. It also has led to House members, knowing their time is limited in the House, to protect or influence the boundaries of their Senate seats for a possible future campaign. Current senators have been known to do the same for a future House race.

**The full article, "Gradual Transformation Under Term Limits," appears in the Fall 2001 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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California enacted term limit legislation in 1990, making it one of the nation's leaders on the issue. The state is taking a leading role again by taking proactive approach to dealing with the ripple effects of term limits. To assist freshman legislators in carrying out their new responsibilities, California created the California Assembly Program for Innovative Training and Orientation for the Legislature (CAPITOL) Institute, a comprehensive training program for new members, covering everything from writing legislation to ethics.

According to Robert M. Hertzberg, California's Speaker of the Assembly, lawmakers – knowing their time to contribute is short – approach their work with a sense of urgency seldom seen before limits were imposed. And in this fast-moving era of the New Economy, a

government that can keep pace is needed.

In short, Hertzberg believes term limits are neither the cure-all promised by its supporters nor the calamity feared by its critics. California's leaders, at least, have come to see them instead as a challenge to reshape our institutions – and as an opportunity to revitalize our work on the public's behalf.

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Michael Saxl, Maine's Speaker of the House, asks "Are term limits really better?" He cites loss of institutional memory, diminished knowledge of the process, empowered un-elected officials, and a co-equal branch of government which is unable to assert its proper role of checks and balances as detrimental side-effects of term limits. He believes these unintended effects of term limits undermine democracy and disable our process and that, surely, there is a better way to infuse the legislative process with new blood and fresh ideas without eroding its foundation and power.

Saxl also believes that term limits leads to distrust in the lawmaking process. Term-limited legislators introduce legislation that has been introduced and voted down many times, and in one case a legislator introduced legislation that was already law and then argued that it should be passed again. Although it sounds absurd, Saxl argues that stories like this are common in term-limited legislatures.

**The full article, "Term Limits and Diminished Returns," appears in the Fall 2001 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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While fresh blood invigorates the political system, Rick Johnson, Michigan Speaker of the House, feels term limits do have downsides. Just as some lawmakers are reaching their full potential, they must leave their posts because of term limits. This has led many in Michigan to question the value of term limits and the need to extend them.

Johnson recognizes the positive outcomes of term limits, however. He states, "Even under term limits, my colleagues are dedicated public servants. A legislator's work cannot be measured solely by the hours they vote on the floor. Responsible lawmakers sponsor local meetings, conduct district office hours and attend dozens of events in their area every week. Throughout the summer months, even though session had adjourned, my caucus convened hearings in every corner of Michigan on health care, land use, tax simplification and declining school enrollments. They answer constituent calls and work to solve problems throughout the year. The workload doesn't change under term limits, just the amount of time you have to finish it."

**The full article, "Challenges of Term Limits," appears in the Fall 2001 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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Larry Adair, Oklahoma's Speaker of the House, believes that term limits may result in more disruptions and confusion in terms of legislative organization. A new period of two-party competition arrived in Oklahoma under term limits, and Oklahoma, like many states, now finds itself in a changed partisan environment. In the past, the Democratic party generally controlled both chambers, and the leadership of both chambers was essentially in place well in advance of the convening of the legislature. Adair believes that term limits are likely to make the organization of each legislature that much more difficult.

Grassroots efforts to repeal or modify legislative term limits in Oklahoma are currently underway. Local government leaders are beginning to consider their own initiative drive out of concern that legislative term limits may have a negative influence on local government and their communities. The fact that repeal or modification of term limits is being raised at this time validates my belief that voters failed here and in many other states to realize that at the time they voted for legislative term limits, that it would some day result in their legislator in whom they have placed their trust and support would some day be forced out of office.

**The full article, "Term Limits and Disruptions in the Legislature," appears in the Fall 2001 issue of *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*.**

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The Fall 2001 issue of ***Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*** includes a special section on counterterrorism. The issue of legislative term limits is also explored within the fall issue.

Recently, [The Council of State Governments](#) launched a national mission to help state leaders better prepare for the future by identifying emerging trends and issues that might have significant impact on state priorities and policymaking. This new **CSG's Trends Forecast Report** is an effort to provide foresight for state officials across the nation. The information in this monthly report is condensed from CSG's quarterly journal, *Spectrum: The Journal of State Government*. For more information on the contents of this report or *Spectrum*, please contact CSG, PO Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910; (859) 244-8220; or [alindon@csg.org](mailto:alindon@csg.org). If you would like to subscribe to *Spectrum*, click [here](#).

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