

Testimony to: Committee on Local Government, Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 3:30 pm.

These brief thoughts are from my past 14 years on HCC board, and current 7 years of 8 year term limit on Hutchinson City Council.

I want to thank you for allowing us to speak on this issue which we feel is most important to further our local government in the best possible manor.

A case for term limits:

1. Provides better direction to paid county manager and staff.

A. Quality Professional staff only needs direction, mentoring, and a commission that checks to see if past policy is being followed. This can be accomplished better with input from more and varied commissioners. After a few years of elected office, you lose your ability to come up with interesting new ideas to challenge the staff. It is arrogant to assume that any elected body is the best group that can serve the public.

B. The more different commissioners the staff has to work with; the more varied the input from elected officials.

C. After a year or two of learning office, and a few years of being in office, the elected official and the professional staff have a tendency to protect themselves and their decisions. It's a natural tendency to become friends and to easier justify that we "are doing what is right". The tenured elected official truly believes that they have better ideas than others.

D. Professional staff should look forward to the challenge of answering the new questions of newly elected officials.

2. The incumbent elected official has an unfair advantage in elections

A. Once elected, a person gains local name identity through meetings and media that it is hard, if not impossible for a challenger to overcome.

B. An incumbent has the ability to gain an unfair election advantage by the increased ability to gather campaign funds.

C. The incumbent can campaign through issues that are currently being discussed at the commission.

3. Term limits allow more people to serve their community.

A. Most, if not all, people run for office wanting to serve and improve their community. It's been my experience that the more ideas over a period of time, the better. That takes input from as many people as possible. The more people truly interested and allowed to serve and being able to do so is positive for the community. The more elected officials, the more respect for the office from the community. Once elected, one always appreciates the community service of others in that office.

4. My belief that "citizen" elected officials are advantageous to the county extends to all levels of elected government. Once elected, it is natural for that elected official to protect his office by votes and appropriations that lead to his/her re election. The elected official should serve their term(s) doing what is right, not what is politically popular to be reelected. It might be suggested that the best elected official is the one that challenges government to do things that will not necessarily help re-elect him. We will not be able to cure this problem at a national level until we are willing to do it at a local level.

For the above reasons, I hope you will allow the people of Reno County to vote on term limits at the Commission level.

Sincerely,

Ron Sellers

3400 Thunderbird

Hutchinson, Kansas 67502 620-662-9510