

**SJR**

**1**

# Senator Linda Menard

State Capitol, Room 9  
Juneau, Alaska 99801



Phone: (907) 465-6600  
Fax: (907) 465-3805

## Alaska State Legislature

### Sponsor Statement for SJR 1

Senate Joint Resolution 1 seeks to put on the next general election's ballot the question of term limits for legislators. This resolution should pass the Legislature and be put to a vote of the people.

Term limits would work like so:

Representatives will be limited to four terms, while senators will be limited to two. Thus, legislators in both houses will have eight years to serve in their respective house. After a legislator terms out, he or she must wait until one complete term intervenes before they can run for office again.

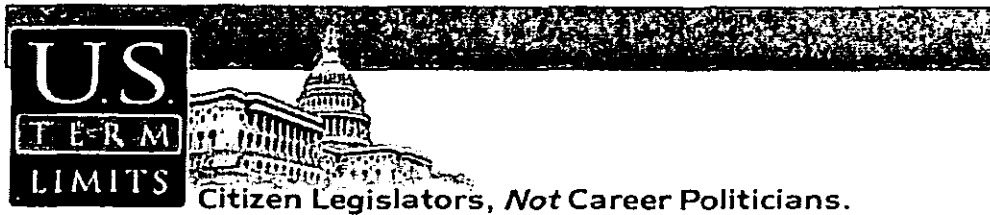
Alaska's Legislature was created with a citizen legislator in mind. The state's founders never intended for citizens to become career politicians. By limiting the terms of lawmakers others in the state who are qualified will have a better chance to use their skills for the betterment of Alaska.

Typically, an incumbent in a House or Senate race has the upper hand. It is unreasonable for legislators to think they are the only ones who can do the job. Furthermore, term limits end the perpetual election cycle, causing legislators to concentrate on decisions that are best for the state as opposed to their reelection chances..

If enacted by voters in the next general election, lawmakers elected before the 2010 election would be grandfathered in, meaning their previous terms would not be counted against the term limit.

Realistically, this issue should pass the Legislature and be put to a vote of the people. Since we as legislators work for the people, the term limits decisions should be left to them.

- ▶ About
- ▶ News
- ▶ State Term Limits
- ▶ Contact
- ▶ Donate
- ▶ Newsletter
- ▶ Home



State Legislative Term Limits

2008 Battles

2009 Battles

## State Legislative Term Limits

State	Year	Limited: terms (total years allowed)	Year law takes effect	Percent Voting Yes
Arizona	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 4 terms (8 years)	House: 2000 Senate: 2000	74%
Arkansas	1992	House: 3 terms (6 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 1998 Senate: 2000	60%
California	1990	Assembly: 3 terms (6 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 1996 Senate: 1998	52%
Colorado	1990	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 1998 Senate: 1998	71%
Florida	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 2000 Senate: 2000	77%
Louisiana **	1995	House: 3 terms (12 years) Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	House: 2007 Senate: 2007	76%
Maine *	1993	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 4 terms (8 years)	House: 1996 Senate: 1996	68%
Michigan	1992	House: 3 terms (6 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 1998 Senate: 2002	59%
Missouri	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 2002 Senate: 2002	75%
Montana	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 2000 Senate: 2000	67%
Nebraska	2000	Unicameral: 2 terms (8 years)	Senate: 2008	56%
Nevada	1994	Assembly: 6 terms (12 years) Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	House: 2006 Senate: 2006	70%
Ohio	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 2000 Senate: 2000	66%
Oklahoma	1990	12 year combined total for both houses	State Legislature: 2004	67%
South Dakota	1992	House: 4 terms (8 years) Senate: 2 terms (8 years)	House: 2000 Senate: 2000	64%
Wyoming ***	1992	House: 6 terms (12 years) Senate: 3 terms (12 years)	House: 2004 Senate: 2004	77%
<b>AVERAGE % of Vote</b>				67%

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

\* Maine's law is retroactive.

\*\* Law in Louisiana was passed by the state legislature.

\*\*\* Wyoming's law was originally passed by initiative in 1994. The legislature amended the law to allow members of the House to serve 12 years. A referendum to return to the original six-year House limits garnered 54% of the vote but failed to get 50% plus one of all voters to veto the legislature.

All of the above have gubernatorial limits in addition to 20 other states.

Alaska, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Washington — in addition to all of the states listed above (excluding Louisiana) — passed federal congressional term limits before the 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton* declared the necessity of a constitutional amendment to limit the terms of Congress.

Oregon voters passed term limits on their legislature and statewide officeholders in 1992 by 70% of the vote. Two termed out legislators sued the voters of Oregon in a case that made its way to the Oregon State Supreme Court. In December 2001, the court ruled that the term limits law violated single amendment

requirements and threw the law out.

Idaho voters passed term limits on their legislature, statewide officeholders and local officeholders in 1994 by 59% of the vote. In 1998, the legislature placed an "advisory" question on the ballot, asking voters to reaffirm their support of term limits. Voters did so. In 2001, state and local office holders sued Idaho voters in a case that made its way to the Idaho Supreme Court, where the court ruled term limits constitutional. In February 2002, the Idaho Legislature ignored the vote of the people and became the first state in the nation to repeal their term limits law.

In an effort to block stricter legislative limits, Utah's legislature placed 12-year limits on its members, a law that was to go into effect in 2006. In March 2003, the legislature repealed their limits. Like, Idaho, Maine, and Wyoming, Utah is a statute-only state, where voters cannot pass constitutional amendments.

The following state's term limits are consecutive: Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Ohio, South Dakota. The following state's term limits are lifetime: Arkansas, California, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada and Oklahoma.

The following state's term limits are a time-out four years or longer: Colorado, Montana and Wyoming

[About](#) [News](#) [State Term Limits](#) [Contact](#) [Donate](#) [Newsletter](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions about Term Limits

How many states have legislative term limits?

Presently, 15 states have term limits for legislators. In all 21 states have passed legislative term limits at one time or another, but the limits have been repealed or declared unconstitutional in six of those states. In Massachusetts and Washington, they were held unconstitutional by the state supreme courts in the late 1990s. Oregon's supreme court held that state's legislative term limits unconstitutional in 2002, and the state legislatures in Idaho and Utah repealed term limits in 2002 and 2003, respectively. Wyoming's term limits were held unconstitutional by the state's supreme court in May 2004.

Why don't more states have legislative term limits?

Most of the states that have term limits got them through the citizen initiative process. Only 24 states have the initiative process, and nearly all of those already have term limits or have voted them down already. Two initiative states - Alaska and Illinois - have never voted on legislative term limits because their initiative process includes restrictions that preclude such a measure from making it to the ballot. Two other initiative states - Mississippi and North Dakota - have voted on legislative term limits in the past, and the measures failed to pass. In states without the initiative process, it would require an act of the legislature to create term limits. This has happened just twice - the Louisiana legislature voted to impose term limits on itself in 1995 (Louisiana is the only term limits state that does not have the initiative process), and the Utah legislature voted in 1994 to impose term limits on itself. The Utah move was an effort to head off a more restrictive term limits ballot initiative, and the Utah legislature has since voted to repeal its term limits.

What are the effects of term limits on state legislatures?

It is difficult to draw general conclusions about the effects of term limits, because there is significant variation not only among the types of legislatures that have term limits, but also among the limits themselves. For instance, the way term limits affect a large, professionalized legislature like California is very different from the way they affect a smaller, part-time legislature like Arkansas. More restrictive limits, like California's lifetime limit of 6 years in the Assembly and 8 in the senate, tend to produce more dramatic results than less restrictive limits, like Colorado's consecutive limit of 8 years in each chamber. NCSL, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments, the State Legislative Leaders Foundation, and a group of legislative scholars from around the country, is currently engaged in a major study of the effects of term limits. Results of the study will be published in late 2004. For information on the study, visit the home page of the Joint Project on Term Limits.

For More Information on Term Limits

Jennie Drage Bowser tracks term limits, and may be reached at 303-364-7700 or [elections-info@ncsl.org](mailto:elections-info@ncsl.org).