



As Congress ages, some question if it's time for term limits

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How long is too long, to hold the same job? It's a subject of debate in Washington when it comes to lawmakers, many of whom have spent decades in office and hope to extend that in midterm elections.

Even though fall brings change each year, it doesn't always hold true on Capitol Hill.

The current Congress is also said to be the oldest Congress ever, bringing up the question: is it time for term limits?

While presidents are held to two consecutive times in the Oval Office, that's not the case in Congress, where — as long as they keep getting votes — they keep their seats, 469 of which are up for grabs.

“Chuck Grassley, you're seeking an eighth term in the U.S. Senate. If you win, you'll be 95 at the end of that term. What do you say to Iowans who wonder if you're up to the task?” one reporter asked the Iowa senator, who is currently 89 years old.

“I think the only thing I can do is tell you how I lead my life today. I go to bed at 9:00, get up at 4:00. Run two miles. Get to the office by 6:00, sometimes a little bit before 6:00,” Grassley said.

Grassley has held a seat in Washington since 1975. Across the aisle, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is predicted to win again, is 82. She's been in Congress since 1987.

Critics argue that the longer they're in, the more removed they are from voters' real-life struggles and new blood means new energy.

“There's a chance to break up patterns of corruption in which people are constantly looking for money for their reelection, well if they know that their term is gonna end at some point, maybe they won't spend their last term doing nothing but raising money for reelection,” said Walter Olson, a senior fellow of constitutional studies at the Cato Institute.

It's not just one party that has discussed the idea of imposing some sort of rule on how long someone can serve and the idea doesn't just target Congress.

After the Supreme Court's controversial ruling on abortion, many said the justices are out of touch and need to be out of power. An Insider/Morning Consult poll showed that 85% of Democrats thought there "probably" or "definitely" should be term limits at the high court and 68% of Republicans said the same.

But in constantly replacing familiar faces, some worry that Capitol Hill could lose key knowledge and experience.

"Many of them will say, in my first four years here, I didn't know how to get anything done and if you limit our terms to eight years, that means half the people here are going to be in that beginner learning stage," Olson said.

He says it could also make politics even more polarizing. If the names on a ballot look unfamiliar, voters could be more prone to just picking a party.