

MINUTES OF THE House COMMITTEE ON Federal and State Affairs

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Neal D. Whitaker at
Chairperson

1:30 ~~am~~/p.m. on January 26, 1983 in room 526-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Reps. Smith and Peterson, who were excused.

Committee staff present:

Russ Mills, Legislative Research
Mary Torrence, Revisor of Statute's Office
Nora Crouch, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Representative Leary Johnson
Representative Jerry Friedeman
Mike Harder, Topeka, Kansas
Fred Allen, Kansas Association of Counties

Chairman Whitaker called the meeting to order and advised the Committee that HCR 5003 was on hearing status.

Rep. Leary Johnson appeared to explain the provisions of HCR 5003 stating he realizes there will be many pros and cons in the issue. He stated that other states have increased House terms to four years and that it is no secret to anyone that campaigning is extremely expensive. He stated that a four year term might improve legislative stability and proposed election on staggered terms where only one half of the House would be up for re-election every two years. (See Attachment A) Rep. Johnson answered questions from the Committee.

Rep. Jerry Friedeman appeared in support of HCR 5003 stating that consideration needs to be given to good government with 4 year terms for House members. He stated that expenses for campaigning have escalated even more than the inflation rate and possibly some of the costs could be reduced and antagonism reduced. He further stated that members become more fruitful and responsible to the constitution in their first year and this should be continued. Rep. Friedeman answered questions from the Committee.

Mike Harder, Topeka, Kansas appeared in support of HCR 5003 stating the members should be judged on accountability, responsiveness, and competence. He stated the four year term is clearly preferable to a two-year term because it allows members greater opportunities to be come informed which allows them to address the public's needs and interests more effectively. (See Attachment B)

Fred Allen, Kansas Association of Counties, appeared in favor of HCR 5003 stating that the four year terms provided for county officers has seemed to be very satisfactory to the voters of Kansas. They are interested in the amount of money that can be saved by the taxpayers on election expense.

Chairman Whitaker announced that the Committee had one bill to take up next week and at that time a vote will be taken on HCR 5003.

The meeting adjourned.

GUEST LIST

FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE 1-26-83

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME

ADDRESS

WHO YOU REPRESENT

Leary J. Johnson

STATE REP

Fred Allen

K.A.C.

Tim Underwood Topeka

KAR

LEARY J. JOHNSON
REPRESENTATIVE 118TH DISTRICT
LOGAN, GOVE, GRAHAM, TREGO
AND PARTS OF NESS AND ROOKS COUNTIES
1000 WARREN AVE
WAKEENEY, KANSAS 67672



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HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
MEMBER AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK
INSURANCE
TRANSPORTATION

Subject: HCR 5003

by: State Representative Leary Johnson

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss House Concurrent Resolution 5003.

I realize that there are pros and cons concerning this issue, however, I wish to concentrate my brief remarks on the positive aspects of this legislation.

First, we as legislators, must realize that our efforts here will merely allow the electorate to vote on whether the House of Representatives term of office should be increased to four years. Other states, such as Alabama, Louisiana, Maryland and Mississippi have already adopted the four year term for their representatives.

It is no secret that campaigns continue to be more expensive. For example, the average amount spent by successful House candidates this past election was over five thousand dollars. On the high side we saw races where individuals spent nearly twenty thousand dollars on their respective campaigns. While this amount may initially appear insignificant, it represents a considerable sum when accounting for opponent expenditures. When totaling these figures, the amount spent was in excess of one and a quarter million dollars.

Attach A

This figure does not include the costs involved in the election process by local governments. I believe that this money could be better utilized if retained in pocket or dedicated to other areas without compromising legislative integrity.

Another important aspect is legislative stability. This legislation provides for staggered terms where only one half of the House will be up for re-election every two years. This procedure will insure that a qualified legislative nucleus will always be present to conduct the affairs of the State. I suspicioned that my personal intent may be questioned so as you study the legislation you will note that condidates of even numbered districts, mine being the 118th district, will be required to run for office in two years to begin the four year process. Keep in mind that a four year term promotes continuity and means a longer perspective.

With the short term comes a certain amount of pressure. Effectively incumbents only have one full year between the time they are elected until the time they begin campaigning again. The political reality is that external pressure is sometimes exerted or manufactured by various groups during the session. Candidates may depend on donations from these groups and the situation itself could conceivably interfere with judgement. It is my opinion that a longer term would reduce this exposure and result in better legislation.

I believe also it is necessary to consider the time and effort involved in a campaign. Certainly the division of these factors during an election year detracts from the ability to serve.

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January 25, 1983

This demand for an individuals time and effort does not insure that the best qualified people are in a position to serve their respective areas. We need people who are dedicated to serve and will commit themselves to better government.

Testimony in Support of House ~~Bill~~
by Mike Harder
(Wednesday, January 26, 1983, The Committee on Federal and State Affairs)

In judging the merits of a proposal to change House terms from two to four years, three values ought to be employed as standards: accountability, responsiveness and competence. The first stems from our widely shared belief that the essence of our system of representative democracy is that those who make the laws should be accountable in periodic elections to those for whom the laws are made. The second is a related value: public policymakers should be responsive to the interests and needs of their constituents. The third, competence, is the belief that the public should be served competently. If we apply these tests, how should this proposal be judged?

1. Accountability. Quite obviously, the two-year term provides more opportunity for, voters to approve or disapprove of a legislators conduct than would be the case in a system of four-year terms. But that generalization assumes that voters can take a legislator's measure after two legislative sessions. There are good reasons to question that premise. Over four sessions there is a likelihood that every member will provide his or her constituency a better basis for a considered performance judgment. But if accountability is the sole standard, I doubt whether a strong case for the four year term can be made. But it should not be the only measure.
2. Responsiveness. To be responsive is to address constituent needs, to be attentive to their opinions as well as their long term interests. Campaigning every two years creates more opportunities to hear opinions than would normally occur if elections were held every four years. But responsiveness to long-term interests is another matter. It is a considera-

tion which comes into focus when competence is added to the list of value-standards.

3. Competence. Nowadays, competence in legislative performance requires more than knowledge of legislative procedure and the norms which govern influence in the legislative process; it requires an in depth understanding of public problems which fall within the domain of a member's committee assignment and, for all members, the problems related to the State's fiscal operations. The latter is every legislator's responsibility because of the particular authority of the legislature to control the purse strings. These kinds of information and insights are not quickly acquired.

Members of Congress are advantaged over state legislators because they are on duty the year around. Some of them, perhaps many of them, become experts in their fields of specialization. Citizen legislators, as in Kansas have only a limited time to learn what they need to know. The four-year term is clearly preferable to a two-year term because it allows a member a greater opportunity to become informed and, therefore, a better chance to address the public's needs and interests effectively.

On balance, my judgment is that when these standards are applied and the pros and cons weighed, the change to four-year term is desirable.

As a member of the Citizen's Committee on Constitutional Revision I supported the extension of the Governor's term from two to four years.

Many of the arguments advanced by the Committee and accepted subsequently by the Kansas electorate are relevant to this proposal as well.

To conclude, I urge the Committee to send this bill to the floor so that it can be debated on general orders. Even if members of this committee entertain reservations about the wisdom of this proposal, it is sufficiently meritorious to be debated by the committee of the whole.