

crumbling of legislative power is clear across states,” said Thad Kousser, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego, and author of a book about term limits. “There’s no more clear finding in the research than a shift in power where the legislature is becoming a less than equal branch of government.”

For all that, it’s become common to hear governors and other executive branch officials complain about term limits because the laws mean they lack negotiating partners whose knowledge and expertise they can count on. It seems that no one who works in a state capitol—or in the law and lobbying shops that surround any capitol—likes term limits.

But there is one group that still finds them attractive—the voting public. Polls suggest that as much as 75 percent of the public favors them. “With new people in office, you have people with real world experience,” says Stacie Rumenap, president of U.S. Term Limits, a group that advocates limits. “Under term limits, you

might have a schoolteacher sitting on the education committee.”^c

That sort of suggestion often is made about term limits—you get rid of the professional politicians and get people who know what the real problems are because they themselves are real. And while Idaho and Utah have repealed their limits, efforts to extend or weaken term limits have been rejected several times since 2002 by voters in Arkansas, Maine, California, Florida, Montana, and South Dakota. California voters did relax the state’s term limits slightly in 2012.

The main effects of term limits, after all, are procedural. It’s difficult to make a convincing case that term limits have made any one particular policy worse, let alone imperiled the quality of life in any state that observes them. The underlying complaint of term limits opponents—that they make legislators less powerful—is one reason many people supported them to begin with.

Source: Adapted from Alan Greenblatt, “The Truth About Term Limits,” *Governing*, January 2006, 24.

^aPeter Slevin, “After Adopting Term Limits, States Lose Female Legislators,” *Washington Post*, April 22, 2007, A4.

^bQuoted in Jeff Gillan, “Segerblom to Begin Long Process of Eliminating Term Limits,” KSMV MyNews3.com, July 4, 2014, http://www.mynews3.com/content/news/story/segerblom-nevada-legislature-term-limits/5ZX-7SdA00q_-u9C008YYQ.csp.

^cInterview with Stacie Rumenap, October 4, 2002.