

Rationale for the Introduction of Term Limits

Executive Summary

The major change to the Constitution in this current revision is the introduction of Term Limits for Officer positions. Initially, this may be seen as controversial, but there are some very good reasons why this change should be embraced and supported. Any organization such as the Association, if it is to flourish, needs new blood, energy and, perhaps most important, perspective and ideas in their leadership roles. Term limits is a way to promote that..

At a high level, the adoption of Term Limits ensures that opportunities are provided for members who wish to serve. They allow for fresh ideas and don't keep one or a small group of individuals in control of the organization for an extended length of time.

The following points are of relevance:

Term limits help Officers stay current with changing times.

We live in a world that is fast moving in terms of Technology, communication channels and ways of researching history. With term limits meaning that Officer posts change incumbents at a maximum of every 6 years, current knowledge, views and experience is guaranteed.

Term limits bring 'equality' amongst Officer positions.

New Officers who might wish to suggest different ways of approaching things or embarking on new projects, can be daunted by the prospect of trying to convince long term holders of validity of their ideas. The Association must avoid the pitfall of dismissing ideas with "We've tried that before." Trying something 10 years before is not the same as trying it today, when neither the Association nor the environment in which it is operating would be the same

Term limits help with recruitment.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, potential Officer candidates are more likely to agree to serve if they know the office has an expiration date.

Term limits allows the Organisation to grow in experience and vision

For the Officers of a small volunteer body, such as the Association, who started out with a specific set of objectives, they may only see their success and not opportunities for further growth and achievement.

Term limits help prevent Officers from getting tired.

With term limits, Officers can work for the Association knowing that their efforts can be sustained for a limited period of time and not lead to a position where an Officer becomes 'jaded' in their role.

Term limits allows for a more considered approach to 'succession planning'

No matter how good an individual Officer is or whether the Association has implemented Term Limits or not, there will inevitably come a time where a position has to be filled. It is much better to be pro-active in that and plan for it, identifying likely successors to positions, being able to ready them for their post and educate them prior to the event. This inevitably will lead to a more successful hand over of responsibilities and stability of the Association.

A defined timetable for Term Limits means continuity

With a stated timetable fo Officer positions changing occupancy, it means that no more than a third of the positions will change in any given year. Understanding of

Association affairs will therefore be maintained and shared with new incumbents.

Term limits remove guilt.

Officers don't have to feel guilty about wanting to leave their position. They can end their time gracefully.

Addressing fears: losing good people

One of the most common fears about term limits is that it will lead to the loss of good people and that the Association will not be able to replace them with equally good candidates.

Indeed, someone who has served several years in post may not be "replaceable" in that you can find a new person with that Officer's exact skills to fill their seat. But that's a false premise. You aren't necessarily trying to *replace* them with an identical person.

The Association's group of Officers should have diverse and complementary skills. The Association Officers should work as a team rather than a group of discrete post holders working without reference to others. When a person steps down and is replaced by someone new (who doesn't know nearly as much) other Officers will help fill that gap. Supporting new Officers will help keep those existing Officers interested and engaged too. I.e., Term limits have a beneficial effect on all serving Officers.

Second, term limits mean you *do* have to do more work to keep the positions refreshed. A healthy volunteer organization should find its leadership improves over time. A healthy volunteer organisation should find people wish to be put themselves forward as potential Officers.

Finally, it shouldn't be a concern that someone will not be able to replace a long serving Officer, or that the new Officer will want to do things differently. It could be viewed that a veteran post holder knows how to do something better than anyone else. But it's also true that a new incumbent might see a whole different solution that requires everyone adapt just a little bit. Anyone new coming into a group that has settled into a routine threatens to disrupt the routine. That possibility should be embraced.

References

A number of sources are referenced in this document, not least of which:

<http://www.lasallenonprofitcenter.org/term-limits-for-nonprofit-boards/>

<http://forsmallnonprofits.com/2015/05/21/lets-have-some-real-talk-about-board-terms-and-term-limits/>

<https://trust.guidestar.org/blog/2014/05/23/5-reasons-why-every-npo-board-should-have-term-limits/>

<http://agb.org/briefs/term-limits>

These, in the main, offer advice to Boards of 'Not for profit' bodies from a US perspective which often have a fund raising element to their basis. However, from a fundamental point of view, there is no difference from that point of view from what should be our own.

