

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the 22nd Amendment

By Laurel Benedum
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When George Washington declined the offer of a third term, he set a precedent for succeeding leaders to serve only two terms that would later be adopted as the 22nd Amendment. His quiet departure from the White House to Mt. Vernon suggested that eight years in office was sufficient for any president, thus establishing an unwritten rule to be followed by each subsequent president—that is until 1940. Franklin D. Roosevelt decided that year he wanted to run again, and despite newspapers' mass criticism for encroachment upon tradition, Roosevelt won and was later re-elected for a fourth term. When Roosevelt died just months into the term, so did the idea of unlimited terms for presidents. The amendment, which imposed a limit of two terms for following presidents, was proposed Mar. 24, 1947, and has been adhered to for nearly 60 years. However, many people have been anything but reluctant to criticize the amendment, saying that it infringes upon the principles of

democracy. But when did we ever have a genuine democracy? Yes, it is true that under the 22nd amendment the people cannot re-elect a president after two terms regardless of widespread support. However, thanks to the Electoral College, popular vote does not guarantee a victory anyhow. The 2000 election exemplified this phenomenon when Bush won the electoral vote over Albert Gore by five—thus winning the election, despite his 540,520 popular vote deficit. Generally and instinctively, people like consistency and this fondness is shown in America's tendency to elect the incumbent. Much of the information available in the media about candidates is often too broad draw a clear conclusion of what candidates truly stand for. So many citizens often vote nostalgically for the known name out of reluctance for change and a lack of knowledge concerning the opposing candidate. If the known name continued to appear on the ballots unlimitedly, constituents would continue to vote for it—simply out of familiarity. Luckily the 22nd

Amendment instigates generally much-needed change for the country by presenting citizens with two fresh faces from which to choose, rather than one and an incumbent. Since the United States has a two-party system, the amendment prevents the chance of the repeated victory for the incumbent because of an unpopular candidate for the opposing party. Because of the 22nd Amendment, if a population is dissatisfied with the performance of a president, it can

eagerly anticipate the president's term ending thus preventing further damage and disappointment. A recent poll showed that 75 percent of Republicans still support President Bush. If he were able to run again, those numbers would give him a significant advantage in the 2008 election—one that many Americans would by no means support. As framers of the Constitution experienced and consequently feared, there is always a risk of

power abuse when no limits are set on the time a president can hold office. Therefore the ratification of this amendment prevents a possible dictatorship that would not only make elections dispensable, but also upset the separation of powers. There will always be a struggle for control between the states and central government, and the 22nd Amendment is one of many fundamental compromises that works on both sides to maintain that balance.



Editorial Cartoon by Laurel Benedum

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