

HCR 3033

Testimony- Rep. Ben Koppelman

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to introduce HCR 3033 to your committee.

As many of you know, our federal government is broken, and I would submit to you that this is greatly due to a dysfunctional Congress. With large annual deficit spending and a skyrocketing national debt, our country is racing toward insolvency at an alarming rate. The last time Congress passed a proper budget was in 2006. Each time Congress does agree on major legislation, it is riddled with un-related pet projects and pork-barrel spending. Many members of congress make a career out of their service and eventually retire much richer and with a taxpayer pension. Many laws that congress has passed, they chose to apply to everyone except themselves. The bottom line is that the American people recognize that Congress is performing poorly.

If you study the founding of our great nation, you will find that the concept of lifelong career politicians was never the intent for how our representative republic was to be governed. The intention was for our leaders to serve for a time, and then return home to their professions and live as average citizens under the laws and policies that they had created. For the first

nearly 150 years, we had not had a president serve more than 8 years in office, following the example set by George Washington. However, once a president broke that precedent, there was a need to restore that balance. That is why the 22nd Amendment was ratified limiting the President to 2 terms. For the first almost 200 years of our nation's history, Congress was a part time job. In 1935, congress was paid \$10,000 a year, and most members still needed to have other careers to support themselves. It wasn't until 1942 that Congress began receiving a pension. Even in the 1960's, Congress was only in session about half of the time, and other than leadership, they did not have staffers. It wasn't until the 1970's that congress began seeing their positions becoming year around and full time. This began the great decline. In 1993, longtime Senator Bob Dole was quoted as saying:

“If we could spend six months here and six months at home, I think the country might be better off. We might be more efficient. We might get more work done.”

Unfortunately, since the federal government had grown so large, Congress is unlikely to return to a part-time citizen legislature body. We need to find a way to once again to get members of Congress to serve the people and not themselves. I believe that the way we do that is to end career politicians in Congress. We can do that through Congressional Term Limits.

In order to term-limit Congress, the US Constitution must be amended. Since Congress is not likely to go against their self-interests, it is unlikely they will propose such an amendment to the States. Thus, it is time that the States use the process that the Founding Father's gave us to deal with situations like this. Article V of the Constitution contains a provision for States to propose amendments without the consent of Congress. If 34 states make a similar call to convene a convention to consider amendments, then Congress has no choice but to facilitate the call. If the proposed amendment(s) that result from such a convention are ratified by 38 states, then the amendment(s) is added to our Constitution. It is time that we limit the length of service of members of Congress and return to the concept of elected officials being public servants.

We are at a crossroads in our history, and I believe that we can either take steps to save our country or watch it decline into irrelevancy.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, I respectfully request a DO-PASS recommendation from the committee. Thank You for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

