



SPOTLIGHT

I Like Ike, but Apparently Not Everybody Does

Last month, I shared my personal ranking of the best and worst presidents in my lifetime on social media. Since I was born in September 1959, that means the list potentially includes everyone from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Donald J. Trump.

Coincidentally, both Eisenhower and Trump made my list of the best presidents at #2 and #3 respectively. I reserved the top spot for my all-time favorite chief executive, Ronald Wilson Reagan, my political hero.

Not surprisingly, my list of worst presidents featured four Democrats: Joe Biden, Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, and Lyndon Johnson. Simply put, liberal policies and personal incompetence are a lethal combination.

Most people agreed with my selections, although some folks offered a “tweak or two” to the list. And then there was the fellow on Substack whom I have since blocked.

“Eisenhower... you’re an idiot!” he wrote in the comment section.

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Term Limits In, Career Politicians Out

We, the People, must demand it...

Demand what, you ask? Term limits for federal office holders. Support for term limits is overwhelming and crosses every political, geographic and demographic divide. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, an eye-popping 87% of Americans favor term limits, including 56% who strongly support the idea. Only 12% oppose the concept (I wonder how many of them are congressmen?)

Simply put, there is no rational reason to oppose term limits unless you have a vested interest yourself. Meanwhile, the argument that “experience matters” can be easily countered by allowing for two six-year Senate terms or six two-year House terms. Twelve years in either body should be enough for anyone but if your ego is super-sized, an allowance could be made for a grand total of 24 years inside the hallowed halls of Congress. But after that, puhleeze go home and get a real job like the rest of us.

Simmering under the surface, however, is another related issue that deserves almost as much attention as term limits: a mandatory retirement age for federal officeholders.

Currently, there is a minimum age restriction of 25 for the House, 30 for the Senate, and 35 for the presidency. Curiously, there is no mini-

mum age requirement for the Supreme Court or other federal courts. Likewise, there is no maximum age for any of the aforementioned positions, which begs the question, why not?

A simple question that deserves a simple answer. In 1788, when the U.S. Constitution was ratified, the average life expectancy for an American male was 38 years. That’s it, folks. Of course, if you somehow managed to dodge measles, mumps, malaria, smallpox, diphtheria, dysentery, scarlet fever, yellow fever, typhoid fever, and typhus and lived to be 60, odds were that you would survive to 75. But you would definitely be the exception, not the rule, and so there was no reason to set a maximum age for the few lucky survivors who lived that long.

Today, American men can count on an average of 77 years and American women a few more than that. However, we all know scores of people in their 80s and 90s - and maybe even a few centenarians, too - which means that it’s time for a mandatory retirement age to be enacted and enforced for federal officeholders lest we have another babbling, bumbling, stumbling Joe Biden (or his handlers) running the country in the near future.

The Pew Research Center also polled Americans on this issue and the results were almost as lopsided as the ones in favor of term limits. A super majority of respondents - 76%

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of Democrats and 82% of Republicans - think there should be an age limit for elected officials. Sorry about that, Chuck Grassley (91), Bernie Sanders (83), Mitch McConnell (83), Jim Risch (82), and Angus King (81) in the Senate... and sayonara to Hal Rogers (87), Maxine Waters (86), Steny Hoyer (85), Nancy Pelosi (85), Jim Clyburn (84), Danny Davis (83), John Carter (83), and Frederica Wilson (82) in the House.

When asked about Supreme Court justices, 82% of Democratic respondents supported a mandatory retirement age whereas Republican

support dropped to 68%, still a sizeable majority. In fact, when the two parties are combined, 79% favor a maximum age for federal officeholders and 74% support one for SCOTUS.

The American system of government thrives on a constant influx of fresh blood and new ideas, which is all the more reason to impose BOTH term limits and a mandatory retirement age. Currently, 31 states and the District of Columbia have a mandatory retirement age for judges that ranges from 70 to 75 (with one outlier, Vermont, which sets it at 90). How about if we all get on the same page and apply a mutually acceptable standard to federal judges, SCOTUS, and both Houses of Congress?

After all, the mandatory retirement

age for commercial airline pilots is 65, for air traffic controllers it is 56 (with some exceptions up to 61), for foreign service employees of the Department of State it is 65, and for federal law enforcement officers, national park rangers and firefighters it is 57. Even the U.S. Military has mandatory retirement ages for enlisted men (62), and general and flag officers (64 unless extended by the President to 68).

One final suggestion: if you have served more than 40 years in Congress, you should have your security clearance revoked and your federal pension rescinded unless you voluntarily resign your seat. There are currently three members of the House who fall into that category... and I think it's shameful.

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Geez, fella, tell me how you really feel!

I responded by saying that virtually every poll of historians and academicians ranks Eisenhower in the top tier of U.S. presidents, usually in the Top 10. I even cited three different polls – one by C-Span in 2021, one by Siena College in 2022, and one by the American Political Science Association in 2015 – that ranked Eisenhower in 5th, 6th, and 7th place. Not too shabby.

In my response, I also chastised the gentleman for his lack of civility. "It is OK to disagree with someone

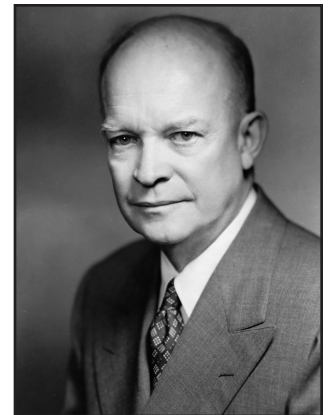
without resorting to childish name calling", I scolded him.

As you may have guessed, he ignored my rebuke and instead, doubled down on his original position, telling me that my opinion and my sources were all wrong... and that he was right.

Looking back at the Eisenhower administration, which lasted from January 1953 to January 1960, there was a lot for "Ike" to be proud of. Not only did he fulfill his promise to end the Korean War, but he also presided over a period of economic growth and relative stability at home. Eisenhower is also credited with two major infrastructure projects that revolutionized transportation in the United States: the Interstate Highway System and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Yes, Eisenhower could have more aggressively supported the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement but, to his credit, he did send federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to enforce desegregation and signed two historic pieces of legislation, the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960.

Overall, a very successful two-term presidency, no matter what my childish critic had to say.



It's Time to Bid Adieu

"Power is the great aphrodisiac."

- Henry Kissinger, New York Times, January 19, 1971

I don't know what you were doing in the spring of 1980, but I was a junior at Temple University in Philadelphia. To my everlasting shame, I was still a registered Democrat - and a liberal one at that - and so, I foolishly cast my vote in the New Jersey primary election that year for Ted Kennedy... and then compounded my mistake by checking the box next to John Anderson's name in the general election.

(By 1984, I was a full-fledged, card-carrying member of the Reagan Revolution and happily voted for the Gipper's re-election.)

In 1980, a first-class stamp cost just \$.15 and a gallon of gas was \$1.19 (seven cents more than a gallon of milk). The sticker price on a new car, such as a Ford Pinto with its exploding gas tank or a Chevy Chevette, was \$7,600 and a new house could be yours for about \$68,000 and change.

Dallas, Magnum P.I., M*A*S*H, Happy Days, and Three's Company dominated primetime TV, while The Empire Strikes Back, 9 to 5, and Private Benjamin were box office gold in the theaters (what teenage boy didn't have a crush on Goldie Hawn?)

The Pittsburgh Steelers defeated the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl XIV, the L.A. Lakers got revenge by beating the Philadelphia 76ers for the NBA title, and the Phillies made up for the Sixers' loss by upending the Kansas City Royals, 4 games to 2, to claim their

first-ever World Series championship.

That same year, Hal Rogers (R-KY), Chris Smith (R-NJ), and Steny Hoyer (D-MD) were all running for the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time. All three men won their races that November, were sworn into office the following January, and have remained there for the past 44 years and counting.

Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) were also elected to the House that year but later graduated to the Senate after 15 and 18 years, respectively, where they remain today.

Not to be outdone, Ed Markey (D-MA) served 37 years in the House beginning in 1976 before transitioning to the Senate in 2013 where he still "resides". Markey is best known for co-authoring the unrealistic and unattainable Green New Deal (and for possibly having the worst comb-over in the history of the Senate).

And then there's the grand old man of the Senate, Chuck Grassley (R-IA). An accomplished lawmaker with a strong work ethic, Grassley has sponsored 909 bills during his lengthy legislative career. Of course, it has taken him 50 years to do so... six years in the House and 44 in the Senate. Grassley, age 91, is the current President pro tempore of the Senate, which makes him third in the presidential line of succession after the Vice President and the Speaker of the House.

What about 85-year-old Nancy Pelosi, you ask? Why, she is still wet behind the ears, not having taken office until June 2, 1987. That means that Nancy has only represented California's 5th district (1987-1993), 8th district (1993-

2013), 12th district (2013-2023), and 11th district (2023-present) for a collective 38 years.

However, the point remains that when you've served so long that your district has changed three different times because of four different censuses, you have probably overstayed your welcome. But try telling that to Nancy... or Steny... or Hal... or any of the other octogenarians clogging the halls of Congress while refusing to make way for relative youngsters in their 40s, 50s, and 60s.

The Political Dictionary defines Potomac Fever as "the condition where a politician is gripped by a desire to stay in government, whether to make a change or for power's sake. The term describes a politician who never intended to stay in Washington, D.C. but eventually 'gets infected' and decides to stay for a long time."

There is only one known cure for this often-fatal disease but sadly, most patients refuse the antidote. In fact, they vehemently fight it with every ounce of strength in their rapidly deteriorating bodies.

It's called Term Limits, and polls repeatedly show that a super majority of Americans support the idea. Alas, the power brokers in Washington do not, which makes Sen. Dick Durbin's recent decision not to seek re-election in 2026 such an unusual - and admirable - one.

Having served seven two-year terms in the House and five six-year terms in the Senate, the 80-year-old Durbin is calling it quits after next year, despite being the #2 ranking Democrat in the Senate.

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His reasoning?

"You observe your colleagues and watch what happens," Durbin said in announcing his decision. For some of them, there's this miraculous aging process where they never seem to get too old. But for a number of other people, they're not so lucky."

"I'm physically and mentally strong," Durbin added. "But I don't want to wait too long and test fate."

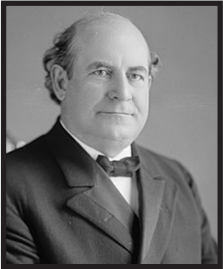
"The decision of whether to run for re-election has not been easy," Durbin said. "I truly love the job of being a United States Senator. But I know in my heart it's time to pass the torch."

The next day, Durbin explained on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" his decision in the simplest possible terms. "If you're honest about yourself and your reputation," he said, "you want to leave when you can still walk out the front door and not be carried out the back door."

I sure hope his colleagues on Capitol Hill were listening.



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