confront representatives such as myself with a very difficult dilemma where we are being asked to support a concept that we believe in very deeply but, yet, which we find at odds with the laws of our own State.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to serve in this body.

ANOTHER VIEW ON TERM LIMITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Madam Speaker, I rise as one who voted against the term-limit limitations, because as I have heard the arguments tonight, it is not how many terms you have, it is what you do with the term, the term, the one term at a time. It is what you do with that term and then it is what the voters think that you have done with that term and how they feel about that term that determines or should determine whether or not you return.

In the case of my State, West Virginia, we are a small state. We have three House Members. Other States have far bigger delegations. I think that my State would be, the majority of my State would say, why is it that we should be limited as to whether or not we can vote for ROBERT C. BYRD, for instance, and the distinguished service that he has had? Why is it that we should be limited in whether or not we can vote for other leaders who may rise and show themselves to be able?

In the case of a small State like West Virginia, with three House Members, please remember that when you have term limits what you are going to do is to turn this place over to the large States. And so the Californias, the Floridas, the Texases will dominate every 2 years who it is that becomes chairs and subcommittee chairs and ranking Members.

So small States have a vested interest in making sure that there is some kind of equality here so that we have an equal say as well. There are many here who say, term limits, we will really rein in the Members on this thing. Nobody ever talks about the staff. Nobody limited the staff. Nobody limited the lobbyists. Nobody limited the others that all are part of this mix called democracy and called a legislative body.

So what happens is then the institutional memory now resides entirely with those who are truly the paid professionals here. I do not say that disparagingly of them, except just to make that observation that those people who become the ranking members and subcommittee chairs and the chairs will have less and less to say about what actually happens in their committees.

□ 2215

I would also like for people to think for a second, what is it that everyone is to be ashamed about for having some kind of experience, particularly if that experience has been reinforced every 2 years in something wonderful called an election? I refuse to be ashamed for the fact that I have developed more experience, and feel that I am a more able representative of my constituency, but knowing all the time that my constituency decides every 2 years whether or not that is the kind of experience they want, or whether I am exercising that properly, or in what they think is a proper format.

Does anyone around here ever walk into a law office, a physician's office, or any there office, into a store, and say ''Hey, could I have the most junior person around here? I want the one who just got here, the one who just got out of medical school, the one who just got their certification. Please, I want to skip over the most senior person. I don't want to get to somebody who has had even maybe 13 years, of course not.''

What is it that is supposedly bad about experience if the voters are truly exercising their control? That gets to a very important point, Madam Speaker, that what we are talking about here is the frustration that is very real in our country about whether or not Congress is responding. That frustration needs to be dealt with in campaign finance reform.

It would be my hope that H.R. 1 would not be a term-limit bill. Actually, let us hope there does not need to be a campaign finance reform bill in 1997, because I would like to see it out on the floor in 1995. That, I think, limiting the amounts of money, curbing the money chase, making it easier for challengers to take on incumbents, that is real term limitation.

Somebody pointed out that 90 percent of incumbents, 91 percent, were reelected last time, but what they did not point out was that so many chose not to run because they saw the odds, they read the polls, they talked to their constituents. The fact of the matter is that over half this Congress, 219 Members, have been here 5 years or less. Almost one-half has been renewed in just the last two elections, the last 4 years.

Madam Speaker, I think those are important statistics. The average lifespan, political lifespan of a Member of Congress in the House is less than 12 years, that very term, that very limitation which many would seek to impose.

Madam Speaker, for all those reasons I happen to think that term limits is one of those bumper sticker phrases which sounds good, but which in reality does not further our democracy.

I think our voters, in West Virginia our voters do not need term limits. I would point out that in our State, for instance, over half of the House of Delegates, on any given election 40 to 50 percent of our House of Delegates is changed. Indeed, many members of our State Senate this year were changed. Our voters know how to judge people and how to limit terms on their own, and that is through a process, a wonderful process called an election.

A HISTORIC NIGHT WITH VOTES ON TERM LIMITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. SEASTRAND). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, rather than to try to make a speech, I just have a few minutes of reflection on what I think happened tonight and what is going to happen in the future.

It is a historic night. The Contract With America said we would allow votes on term limits, and we did. Now it is up to the public to see who voted and how they voted on all the votes. If you really want term limits, you are going to have to act on what the body did tonight. If you think there is some correcting that needs to be done, it is up to you to do it.

I can assure you this, after having been here almost 100 days, that this body is not going to give in to the will of the people easily. There is plenty of blame to go around, and the numbers speak for themselves. Eighty percent of the Democratic Party voted against final passage on this bill. Eighty percent of the Republican Party voted for final passage. Those are pretty compelling numbers. However, to be honest, Mr. Speaker, there is shared blame here. The Republican Party needs to push term limits harder, from the bottom and the top. My class, 73 Republican freshmen, about 90, 95 percent of us believe in term limits and believe in it deeply. I admire people who disagree with me who have equally strong beliefs, and they do exist, but what we have to do as a party is to get more focused and make sure the bill does not get messed up in committee and have to explain our positions here and get off track.

I think we will learn something from tonight, that we will be more focused next year, and when the vote comes in the first part of the 105th Congress, that we will be more focused as a party and we will really, really push for term limits.

The good news is that people have voted, they are sort of out in the public's eye now, and you can determine who is with you and who is against you. The bad news is that the people who are not members of a term limits organization, and I do feel sorry for those people who are Members of term limits organizations that have worked so hard to get their message across, that it fell short, but the average, everyday citizen who is not a member of anything, other than maybe their church, who is trying to raise their kids, trying to make it through life, we let them down. That is what really bothers me the most.