

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Chairman, just last week, after a historic debate, we discussed and approved the Personal Responsibility Act, sending a clear message: Americans must take responsibility for their own actions.

Two weeks ago, our debate on common sense legal reform also focused on the proposition that individual responsibility is the hallmark of our Nation.

Isn't it ironic that we are now moving to strip Americans of the most basic, crucial responsibility of all: The responsibility to remain alert, active, and informed; the responsibility to monitor elected officials; the responsibility to cast an intelligent vote on election day.

Some of the most well-meaning, thoughtful, and patriotic individuals of our day are strongly in support of term limits, inside and outside of this body. We are reminded that polls tell us a vast majority of our fellow citizens, at least in principle, strongly support term limits.

It is our responsibility, as guardians of the people's liberties, to oppose this undemocratic and self-destructive step backward.

Adoption of a term limit amendment would enhance, not destroy, the public apathy which is already a festering problem. Does anyone in this Chamber truly believe that the 62 percent of the American electorate who stayed home on election day 1994 would really have been motivated to appear at the polls simply by knowing whoever they elected would be limited to 12 years in office? Why would any qualified candidate bother to run for Congress against any incumbent, if he or she knew perfectly well that a wait of a few years would present an open seat? Why would any political party or committee, or the news media, bother to research and publicize the voting record of any Member, knowing that person would be gone within 12 years, no matter what? Who would bother to raise money or devote time to opposing any incumbent if we knew they would soon be gone?

Term limits are being proposed to solve a problem that does not exist. Over half the current Members of Congress began their service here since 1990. During the 8 years that Ronald Reagan was President, the House experienced a 60-percent turnover of membership.

Just this morning—March 29, 1995—the Washington Post pointed out in an editorial:

What term limit supporters want is what is happening without term limits. Of the 435 members of the House, 219—a majority—have been there less than 5 years. Turnover has been especially dramatic in the last two elections: The House class of 1994 included 87 first termers, the class of 1992 included 110 . . . All by themselves, without any law compelling them to do so, voters have shaken up Congress a great deal in a very short time.

The House should vote this week to reject constitutional amendments that would impose term limits.

The Washington Post editorial continues, because they are an unnecessary interference with the freedom of voters to elect whom they want. Term limits would also make Congress a less democratic place. By robbing Congress of the expertise that members who manage to get reelected can develop over many years, term limits would concentrate expertise—and thus, power—in congressional staffs, in the executive branch and in this city's growing cadre of paid lobbyists.

Those Americans who have chosen to exercise their responsibility in voting have been remarkably discriminating. It is an insult to their intelligence, and to their patriotism, to contend

term limits are the only possible way to turn out Representatives who have outlived their usefulness.

Our Nation already has term limits: it's called voting.

Cokie Roberts is not only one of our Nation's most respected journalists, she is also the daughter of two former colleagues of ours. She pointed out just prior to the 1992 elections that Congress "is a place to be taken seriously, a place for professionals. That does not mean that everyone in Congress should be a lifelong politician, and few are * * * But some experienced souls will still be there providing an institutional memory, explaining the importance of protecting congressional prerogatives in the face of what may be an aggressive new administration and assuring freshly elected members that they can take principled but unpopular stands and live to fight another day."

The supporters of term limits allude to the old days of the citizen Congress as if there were a time in our history when voluntary term limits were the rule. In reality, the services of such American giants as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Thomas Hart Benton would have been denied us, at the peak of their intellectual capacities, had term limits been in effect in the 1800's. Had they been in effect then, the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, which helped awaken our Nation's conscience on slavery, would never have taken place because Senator Douglas would have been ineligible for reelection.

In our own century, some of the most outstanding services of Senators Hubert Humphrey and Barry Goldwater, of Speaker Sam Rayburn—and the Speaker NEWT GINGRICH—would have been denied us had term limits been in effect.

I do not subscribe to the theory that public service is the only job in our society in which experience is bad, not good.

Some of the criticism of Congress which has led people to support term limit proposals is justified. However, term limits is not an effective means of addressing these concerns, and may be a case of going from the frying pan into the fire. In fact, no problems have ever been resolved by taking rights and responsibilities away from the people.

During the recent 40-year domination which the Democrats enjoyed in this Chamber, all too often committee chairmen utilized their seniority to thwart the will of their colleagues and of the people. The new House rules which we adopted this past January—and which I was pleased to support—precludes this from happening again. Chairmen are now restricted to 6 years in the chairman's seat, no matter how many times the voters at home exercise their right to re-elect them. Long overdue election reforms and changes in campaign finance rules, can also level the playing field, encouraging responsible challenges to incumbent Members of Congress. Term limits will not.

Throughout my many years as a Member of this body, I have never experienced an unopposed election. Every 2 years, I have defended the positions I had taken, explained my voting record, and accounted to the people for my conduct in office. I believe that this was the way our Founding Fathers intended Congress to work, and I see nothing wrong with this.

Some supporters of term limits seem to think it would be desirable to remove this ac-

countability to the people. George Will, perhaps the most notorious spokesperson in favor of term limits, openly states that he favors a constitutional distance between the people and Members of Congress. The theory seems to be that if we in the Congress do not have to worry about reelection, we will do the right thing. Our colleague in the other body—Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky—quite articulately points out that: "The underlying presumption here is that 'the right thing' must be contrary to the will of the people; and once you realize that, you see how vehemently anti-populist and undemocratic term limits really are."

The importance of the Congress to our Founding Fathers is underscored by the fact that it is established by the very first Article of the Constitution. The first section of that article defines the Congress; the second states that: "The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States * * *." It is interesting to note that Members of the House of Representatives are the only public officials whom the Constitution specified, from the very beginning, are to be elected by the people.

Sadly, we know that the term "people" had a different meaning in 1787 than it does now.

To correct these inequities, our Nation has broadened the definition of "people" as times and growing awareness demanded. By the 1840's, the requirement that all voters be property owners, which was taken for granted by our Founding Fathers, was eliminated by law in most of the States. By constitutional amendment our Nation extended the vote to racial minorities and former slaves in 1870, to women in 1920, to residents of the District of Columbia in 1961, to those who cannot afford poll taxes in 1964, and to 18-year-olds in 1971. Through the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent legislation, we made our ideals a reality by enforcing the extension of the franchise to all Americans.

Today, we are asked, for the first time in our Nation's history, to turn the clock back on 208 years of progress. After two centuries of expanding the electorate and the rights of our citizens, for the first time, an amendment is proposed that would restrict the rights of Americans to make a free and open choice regarding their representatives, and which would absolve them of the responsibility of remaining alert and active.

Mr. Speaker, term limits is more than just a bad idea. It is a threat to our system of government. Let us reject this amendment and get on with the business of governing.

TRIBUTE TO THE GOLDEN EAGLES
OF NORTH CAROLINA HIGH
SCHOOL

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 4, 1995

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, for the second time in 3 years, a school in the Sixth District has captured the 1994-95 North Carolina high school 1A/2A dual team wrestling championship. What makes it even more special, is that it is the same team which won both titles.

On February 11, the Golden Eagles of East Davidson High School won the State 1A/2A dual team wrestling championship with a 28-to-25 sudden-death overtime victory against Mount Pleasant High School. Head Coach Bobby House, who has guided East Davison wrestling to an outstanding 159-33 dual team record over the last 11 seasons, told the Thomasville Times that this year's squad was special:

This is a different group of kids. That group in '93, I wouldn't trade 'em for nothing. And I wouldn't trade these kids for nothing. They're fantastic. These parents here work crazy for us and do everything we ask them to do. The booster club gave us a great practice facility. I mean, what can I say? Danny Ward, the A.D., has done everything for us we could possibly ask. All the coaches participate in doing things. It's just a fantas-

tic situation to be involved with—a chance to win a state title.

Coach House would be the first to note that it takes a total team effort to compile a record of 24-1 as the Golden Eagle did this season. Special notice must be given, however, to heavyweight wrestler Jeremy Perry who scored an escape point with 4 seconds remaining in overtime to seal the win for East Davison. Sophomore David Children who led the Golden Eagles with 29 wins against only 3 losses this season, told the Times it was only fitting that Perry clinched the championship. "He said at the beginning of the year he didn't want anything but a state championship, and that's the man to have on the mat when it happened. So, I'm glad it was him."

We are glad for all of the members of the East Davidson wrestling squad. Congratulations to Head Coach Bobby House, Assistant

Coach Brian Lingerfelt, and each member of the team. Best wishes to Doug House (103), Michael Tucker (112), Jeff Lowman (119), Brad Moore (125), Chris Burkhart (130), Tony Peters (135), John Musser (140), Shane Sebastian (145), Chris Waddell (152), Daryl Childress (160), David Lackey (171), Tim Daut (171), Jay Rollins (189), and Jeremy Perry (heavyweight). Special thanks is also given to managers David House and C.J. York and to the "Wrestlerettes" Lori Blake, Megan Gordon, and Jamie Fleming.

To Principal Ben Terrell and Athletic Director Danny Ward, and to all of the students, faculty, staff, families, and fans of East Davidson High School, we offer our congratulations on capturing the State of 1A/2A dual team wrestling championship. The entire Sixth District of North Carolina is proud that you have won this title 2 out of the last 3 years.