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Keep limits: Longer time in office won't fix state

BY PATRICK L. ANDERSON

Michigan voters adopted term limits in our state Constitution in 1992. In doing so, we continued a tradition in our country that extends back to our nation's first Constitution and across more than half of the current 50 states. In every case in which elected officials have asked state voters to abolish term limits, the voters have refused. Michigan voters, I am convinced, would do the same thing if our elected officials similarly attempted to excuse themselves from our Constitution's term limits.

It is obvious from recent history that term limits are not responsible for our current fiscal crisis. If we look back to 2000, when our current term limits were also in place, Michigan was doing great. Our state had a AAA bond rating, an unemployment rate lower than that of the U.S. as a whole, and \$1 billion in our rainy day fund. Economic times were better, but we also had officials who, by and large, were doing their jobs to keep state expenditures within our revenue.

Unfortunately, our current leaders have not fulfilled their constitutional responsibility to do the same. It does not take decades of experience in government to understand the need to spend less than you are projected to receive. Repeatedly spending money we do not have has compounded our economic decline and caused fiscal crises.

Only structural reforms can repair a structural deficit. Fundamentally, this is not a question of experience; it is a question of will. This is the same question posed to every household, every school board and every business owner: Do you spend what you don't have, or do you make the tough choices to bring your expenses in line with your income?

I acknowledge that term limits make the job of lobbyists harder, as they have to explain their organization's position repeatedly. It makes it easier, though, for an elected official to understand the concerns of ordinary citizens.

With the state in fiscal crisis and the many other serious decisions our state is facing, we are better off demanding that our elected officials do their jobs than wasting time fixing something that isn't broken.

Recent blaming of our current fiscal crisis on term limits is both historically incorrect and a distraction. During this critical economic time in Michigan, isn't it more effective to spend our energy on the issues facing Michigan that are critical to the success of our state?

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