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0521839858 - Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism

Thad Kousser

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Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism

The wisdom of term limits and professional politics has been debated since the time of Aristotle, spurring “reforms” of legislatures in Athens, Rome, Venice, and the United States under the Articles of Confederation. This book examines recent trends in American states to investigate the age-old question of how the rules that govern a legislature affect the behavior of its members and the policies that it produces. The clear and consistent finding is that the two reforms have countervailing effects: Whatever professionalization has brought more of, term limits have reduced. This lesson comes from quantitative analyses of data from all fifty states and detailed examinations of legislative records from six states, informed by interviews with more than one hundred legislators, staff assistants, lobbyists, journalists, and executive officials.

Thad Kousser joined the University of California at San Diego faculty in 2003 after receiving his Ph.D. in 2002 from the University of California at Berkeley. He has previously worked as a legislative aide and committee consultant in the California State Senate and more recently as an aide to Senator Ron Wyden through the APSA Congressional Fellowship. His publications include work on term limits, reapportionment, campaign finance laws, the blanket primary, health care policy, and European Parliament elections. This book is based on his dissertation, which won the APSA’s William Anderson Prize in 2003.

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2005

Printed in the United States of America

Typeface Sabon 10/13 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kousser, Thad, 1974–
 Term limits and the dismantling of state legislative professionalism / Thad Kousser.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-83985-8 – ISBN 0-521-54873-X (pbk.)

1. Term limits (Public office) – United States – States. 2. Legislators – Term of office – United States – States. 3. Legislation – United States – States. 4. Legislative bodies – United States – States. I. Title.

JK2488.K68 2004

328.73'073–dc22 2004051842

ISBN 0 521 83985 8 hardback
 ISBN 0 521 54873 X paperback

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To the Koussers,

Kate, Morgan, Sally, and Rachel

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Acknowledgments

Because this project began as a graduate dissertation at UC Berkeley, I owe the greatest debt for its development to my advisers there. Nelson W. Polsby has been involved in the modern term limits debate since it began, demonstrating all the best qualities of a public intellectual. He mentored me throughout my graduate career by pushing me to place recent political developments in a broader context, keeping me full of tea and conversation and making sure that my methodological toolbox contained not only econometrics and game theory but Yiddish as well. Henry Brady explained quantitative methods to me more cogently and sensibly than anyone ever has and provided support and guidance throughout this project. Even though he has been subjected to 500 pages of our family's prose now, John Ellwood's only revenge was to craft thoughtful and useful comments that particularly improved the chapter on budget bargaining. Eric Schickler guided me through the initial stages of the project in his prospectus-writing class, chaired my prospectus defense, and read and improved every page without complaint.

Bruce Cain did everything that a dissertation chair could. He lent me his insights about the effects of term limits and his links to policy makers and provided the resources and encouragement to go to Denver, Augusta, Salem, Santa Fe, Springfield, and Sacramento. When I was not on the road, we chatted nearly every day for four years. His wisdom and enthusiasm directed me through every part of my dissertation.

To turn a technical dissertation into a more readable book, I have relied greatly on the guidance of Lewis Bateman of Cambridge University Press and two anonymous reviewers. Lew's initial interest gave me the motivation to turn it into a manuscript, and his patience gave me the time

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to improve it tremendously by responding to the reviewers' constructive and detailed comments.

All of the legislators, lobbyists, journalists, and especially the legislative staff whom I interviewed were kind enough to give me their time, were generous with their archival records, and were wonderfully reflective about how the institutions that they love to serve have changed. They made all of my travels worthwhile. So did the staff of the National Conference of State Legislatures. Rich Jones's hospitality went beyond the call of duty, and Karl Kurtz, Jennie Bowser, Brian Weberg, and Brenda Erickson all lent their expertise and their data.

Both the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at UC Berkeley and the Department of Political Science at UC San Diego have been uncommonly supportive scholarly homes. I owe great debts both to the IGS staff, especially Liz Weiner, Marc Levin, Terry Dean, and Ron Heckart, and to all of those – Pat Egan, Casey B. K. Dominguez, Matthew Jarvis, Ray LaRaja, Jon Cohen, Jake Bassett, Keith Smith, and Megan Mullin – who read and commented on drafts. The smart and tireless research assistants who collected and analyzed much of the California data, including Kelly Yang, Anka Lee, Liz Barge, Nancy Kang, Dan Enemark, Drew Cross, and Brian Brokaw, helped to keep me excited about the process of academic discovery. My department at UC San Diego believed in my nascent project enough to hire me, which gave me the institutional resources to finish up and, more importantly, gave me an office right in the midst of one of the smartest sets of colleagues anywhere.

Finally, my growing family has always been supportive, tolerated my distractions with work at family events, and even cheerfully edited this manuscript. Sally and Morgan Kousser, Frank and Channa Mannen, and Peggy and Nick Cawthon deserve many thanks. But the most thanks go to Kate Kousser, who put up with me taking dissertation notes on the beach in Positano, dragging her to state capitols, and constantly talking about legislatures, and who helped me every step of the way.