



STATEMENT

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Arlington NAACP Supports Term Limits for City Council Urges Residents to VOTE FOR “PROPOSITION E” in Mid-Term Elections

The proposal to limit the number of terms served by Arlington City Council members has provoked a heated debate. The proposal, which has been labeled “Proposition E” would limit council members to three, two-year terms and would count past time served.

Those in power and opposed to term limits have argued that “Proposition E” is unfair and extreme. However, what is unfair is the fact that there are currently three Arlington City Council members who have each served **SIXTEEN YEARS on the council**. What is extreme is the ***extremely long time those serving on the Arlington City Council are holding those positions.***

Ambassador Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations declared in her resignation last week: **“I think you have to be selfless enough to know when you step aside and allow someone else to do the job.”**

Ambassador Haley understood the importance of term limits and the value of new leadership in order for a community to thrive.

It appears that the elected leaders in the City of Arlington do not believe in the importance of new leadership and have forgotten that the positions they hold should be of Citizen Legislators and not professional municipal politicians with lifetime access.

The citizens of Arlington deserve better, we know it and so do our leaders.

When a term limits petition was circulated last June, residents declared their support for it by signing and agreeing that the proposal be added to our voting ballots. More than 11,000 citizens signed it. It is important to note that the average voter turnout in May city elections is around 8,500 citizens casting ballots. **More registered voters signed the petition in support of term limits than actually turn out to vote.** In fact, Arlington’s only African American mayor signed the petition in support of term limits.

Poll after poll has shown that citizens in municipalities, like Arlington — of every political, economic and ethnic background — want term limits. As it stands, Arlington City Council Members are still allowed to serve as a lifelong career.

Therefore, the only way for citizens to take back control is ending the stranglehold of incumbency. Instituting term limits will break the domination and make room for new leaders and better accountability.

Term Limits for the City of Arlington will:

- 1) **Produce new leaders.** Term limits will allow ordinary citizens an opportunity to serve. More importantly, it will create room for citizens who are interested in making a difference rather than citizens who want to be in power forever. Arlington has nearly 400,000 residents and many of these residents are as capable as **the nine (9) individuals who remain in power.**
- 2) **Increase the number of competitive elections.** In communities without term limits, many elected positions are unopposed. Many citizens who can serve and make great leaders are often hesitant to challenge incumbents for fear of the financial expense of campaigning. Because incumbents enjoy the benefit of name recognition, they can rely on their name ID to defeat their challengers in elections. Term limits ensure that incumbents will leave and make room for new leaders.
- 3) **Term limits will not affect the day-to-day operations of the city.** Opponents to term limits generally make the claim that there is not enough time for the newly elected to simultaneously learn the job and represent the people properly. This argument is frivolous. We elect a president every eight years and many elected officials every term of years and each of these individuals learn and do their jobs effectively. Most importantly, elected officials, in this case council members, have support from the City Manager and city staff **who remain there** after each election.
- 4) Term Limits will keep a tight rein on the potential for political corruption. Limits on terms mean a lesser risk of corruption. Term limits could help limit the influence of special interest groups and the influence of big money in city decision making, thus potentially limiting the practice of campaign contributors and their influence being entangled with Arlington city government.
- 5) Term limits will promote new and fresh ideas about municipal governance; fresh new perspectives are something the City of Arlington sorely needs. **Term limits mean that after a period of time, the playing field will once again be leveled, and a seat will be open without an incumbent.**

The answer to the question of whether term limits lead to a more diverse governing body is not straightforward. But, what we do know is that the electoral method, in place since the city's founding, is not working. It benefits individuals and families with wealth and those to whom the wealthy bestow power upon.

More than two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin stated that "In free governments, the rulers are the servants, and the people their superiors. For the former (rulers) to return among the latter (the people) does not degrade them, but promotes them." It's time to return Arlington City Government to its rightful owners; the people.

For the reasons we have outlined and many more, **the Arlington NAACP supports "Proposition E" on the City of Arlington ballot for the 2018 Mid-Term Election.**

We urge all citizens to VOTE FOR "PROPOSITION E". A vote for "Proposition E" is a vote FOR TERM LIMITS for Arlington City Council.