

December 2, 2015

In-Nate Problem

My brother, Tim Jacob, blames me for sucking him into politics. And I have reason to feel guilt, for politics is filled with — *ugh* — politicians.

Back in 1992, I urged Tim to join Steve Munn and Lance Curtis, who were launching a petition drive to put term limits before voters. Along with other do-it-yourself citizens, they gathered (all volunteer) 100,000 signatures. Then, against a special-interest-funded TV barrage, term limits prevailed with the largest YES vote of any initiative in state history.

In 2004, Tim was called back into service when legislators proposed a constitutional amendment to weaken term limits, using ballot language claiming it would “establish” limits. Voters saw through it, crushing the scam 70 to 30 percent.

But last year, legislators got even trickier. Their Issue 3 ballot language told voters the measure would ban gifts from lobbyists to legislators, create an “Independent Citizen Commission” to set salaries and “establish” term limits. Enough voters were fooled: Issue 3 passed 52 to 48 percent. Now, lobbyists are buying legislators even more meals, the “independent” commissioners awarded the very legislators who appointed them a 150 percent pay raise, and term limits were doubled to a ridiculous 16 years.

My brother co-chaired the unsuccessful effort to alert voters, noting that legislators “pursued a campaign of silence . . . letting the deceptive ballot title do their work.”

Today, he and a band of resilient volunteers have filed — and are gathering petition signatures for — a new initiative to give Arkansans an honest choice on restoring the stricter limits.

Yet, Monday morning, Rep. Nate Bell, who voted for Issue 3 and then hid throughout the campaign, tweeted, “I am publicly challenging Tim Jacobs [sic] of Arkansas Term Limits to a public debate on subject. Are there any #arpx news orgs that would host?”

Rep. Bell’s follow-up tweet announced, “Jacobs [sic] has declined to debate me on proposed term limits amndmnt. ‘Well I’m busy overcoming your fraud now, so you’ll have to wait’ #arleg.”

My brother, being wiser than I (due undoubtedly to his being *older*), didn’t take the bait. There’ll be plenty of time for debate once the initiative has enough signatures to be placed on the ballot.

In the meantime, Mr. Bell can huddle with career politicians, perhaps New York’s former Speaker Sheldon Silver. But hurry, before Silver goes to prison for corruption.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

