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Indicting Incumbency

How does that old, pithy anti-term limits slogan go, again? “We already have term limits, they’re called *indictments!*”

Wait . . . is that it?

Must be. This election year — the year of the outsider, the year of unbridled contempt for establishment, Washington, D. C., politicians — has seen only one incumbent congressman defeated by the voters.

Just one. It came late last month in the wake of a 29-count felony indictment charging Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.) with bribery, theft, bank and mail fraud, racketeering, and more.

In all the other congressional primary contests pitting incumbents against challengers across the country so far this year, a solid 100 percent were won by the incumbent — zero won by challengers.

Rep. Fattah, whose corruption trial began in federal court on Monday, has pled not guilty to all charges, proclaiming his innocence. “Chaka Fattah’s lifestyle is not on trial,” his defense attorney told jurors. “Philadelphia politics are not on trial. [Congressional] earmarks, donations, grants to nonprofits are not on trial.”

But Congressman Chaka Fattah certainly is.

The incumbent’s previous re-election had been a breeze — completely unopposed in the all-important Democratic Primary, and then garnering 88 percent of the vote against his sacrificial GOP challenger. That was in 2014, before the felony charges.

Following the indictment, the *Washington Post* reported that Fattah “found it difficult to raise money after the party establishment all but abandoned him.” So, even in this single instance, the FBI and the party establishment, more than voters, sent this 22-year incumbent packing.

I have a new slogan: “We don’t have term limits, and we need ’em!”

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

