

Catnip for Arrogant Politicians

March 28, 2019

Arkansas Sen. Alan Clark pretends that his bill, Senate Joint Resolution 15, would toughen the term limits that apply to him.

Clark's masterpiece, which sailed through the Senate 27-3 on Tuesday, most certainly does not. While it purports to toughen term limits from 16 years to 12 years, read the fine print.*

First, these legislators are grandfathering themselves in at 16 years.

Second, Clark's amendment removes the current lifetime limit, allowing politicians to return to office after just four years out.

Well, in 2014, Arkansas legislators had tricked voters, referring a dishonestly worded measure onto the ballot. It claimed to establish term limits and ban gifts from lobbyists to legislators.

For another 12 years.

And then perhaps *an additional* dozen years.**

What is going on here, you ask?

Well, in 2014, Arkansas legislators had tricked voters, referring a dishonestly worded measure onto the ballot. It claimed to establish term limits and ban gifts from lobbyists to legislators. The amendment



Arkansas Sen. Alan Clark

accomplished neither; lobbyists continue to ply legislators with food and drink while existing term limits were weakened.

Last year, a citizens group turned in 135,000 voter signatures to place the strict limits citizens had originally enacted (1992) onto the ballot. But a lobbyist lawsuit with technical signature challenges won a 4-3 state supreme court decision blocking the initiative.

Nonetheless, it was too late to remove the measure from the ballot. Votes were cast, just not counted. Fortunately, the *Arkansas Times'* Max Brantley released vote totals in three large counties showing that the citizen-sponsored term limits had won big.

Which scared Arkansas' prima-donna careerists, Clark especially, to create the current exercise in representing themselves, not the citizens of Arkansas.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

** Clark's constitutional amendment originally contained a provision taking term limits for state legislators out of voters' hands by banning use of the initiative process to propose changes. Thereafter, only legislators could address the length of their own careers. That bit of self-interested boss-rule was jettisoned, apparently, as too obviously and arrogantly anti-voter.*

*** Those additional years — which, depending upon longevity, could extend past three decades — come with additional pension benefits, too.*