

STATE SENATOR • GILDA Z. JACOBS • 14TH DISTRICT

Jacobs Press Release

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Jacobs Sponsors Measure To Take Term Limits Change To The Voters

LANSING- State Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) recently introduced Senate Joint Resolution G, a resolution to allow voters to modify term limits for state senators and state representatives.

“We have now been through a cycle in both state legislative chambers where those elected under term limits have either been ‘termed out’ or will be ‘termed out’ in two years. This has left both chambers with very little institutional memory. I feel that our current term limit restrictions have had a profound impact on how law and policy is forged in Michigan, and not necessarily for the better,” Senator Jacobs said. “Unfortunately, one of the unintended consequences of term limits as restrictive as ours is that, in general, the policymaking focus is shifted away from the long term and more towards the short term,” Jacobs continued.

Term limits for state legislators were adopted by a state constitutional amendment approved by the voters in November 1992. Originally, term limits were promoted as a check and balance measure by the people to ensure that legislators stay in touch with their constituencies, bring in fresh ideas, and break through the power concentrations of only a handful of long-standing senior members of each chamber. Senator Jacobs feels that Michigan’s strict term limits virtually undermined such goals.

“It is true that term limits have brought in many new faces, myself included, with a variety of new perspectives,” Jacobs said. “This legislature is filled with highly talented lawmakers, as it has been for decades. The difficulty with our current term limits is that with so many talented individuals representing a multitude of varying agendas, our lawmaking capacity is very much like ‘herding cats’,” Jacobs added. The truth is that good policymaking requires more than talent and fresh ideas. It requires strong personal relationships across the partisan divide, it requires institutional memory, and perhaps most importantly, it requires experience.”

Senate Joint Resolution G would put before the voters a constitutional amendment to extend State Senate terms from two to three four-year terms, and extend terms in the State House of Representatives from three two-year terms to six two-year terms. The resolution would also impose a limit on chairmanship positions to no more than four years per chamber. Senator Jacobs explained that in today’s legislature, much legislation falls victim to committee chairs’ personal agendas or special interest influence, regardless of chamber or party affiliation.

“The mere fact that legislation is discharged from committees ever more frequently, without a public hearing or even input from committee members, I feel is a symptom of our need to reform,” Jacobs remarked. “At the end of the day, term limits have been in effect for 16 years. It is time to give the voters the opportunity to ask themselves, ‘Did term limits achieve its original intent or is it time to move the state in a different direction?’”

Before the question could come before the voters, Senate Joint Resolution G must first pass both the House and Senate by a two-thirds vote of all members elected and serving.

“I remain hopeful that my colleagues and I can work together to put this measure before the voters and allow the people to determine what they feel is in the best interests of their communities and the state,” Senator Jacobs concluded.

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Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Campaign & Election Oversight, Families & Human Services and Finance committees. She is a member of the Economic Development & Regulatory Reform and Health Policy committees. She can be reached toll-free in Lansing at 1-888-937-4453.