

Senate Election Law and Internal Affairs Committee

Kelly Flathers 271-3093

CACR 9, relating to terms of office for state officers. Providing that terms shall be for 4 years.

Hearing Date: February 21, 2017

Time Opened: 9:41 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:59 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Birdsell, Gray, Sanborn and Soucy

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Woodburn

Bill Analysis: This constitutional amendment concurrent resolution provides for a 4-year term of office for the governor, executive council, state senators, and state representatives.

Sponsors:

Sen. Lasky

Sen. Fuller Clark

Sen. Hennessey

Sen. Kahn

Sen. Soucy

Who supports the bill: Sen. Bette Lasky - District 13; Sen. Jay Kahn - District 10; Sen. Martha Fuller Clark - District 21; Mary Till; Nancy Marashio - League of Women Voters; Sylvia Gale

Who opposes the bill: Darryl W. Perry - Liberty Lobby LLC; Will Anderson - Concord, NH

Who is neutral on the bill: No one

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Bette Lasky – District 13

- This relates to the terms of office being a 4-year term for state officers.
- This has been my “fun bill” for the session. We’ve all heard various iterations of this request for a 4 year term, mostly for Governor.
- During my time campaigning this election season, I heard continuously that elections in NH are never-ending. When I asked constituents about 4-year terms, they were supportive of the idea.
- Although ideally I would like to see something like this go to the voters, I’d like to put together some sort of committee to look at this seriously, at the very

least.

- I put forth 4-year terms for all state offices as a starting point for this discussion. It is said that this has never passed because neither political party wants to relinquish the chance to change the corner office after 2 years, rather than 4. Yet, the reality is that all our Governors in modern time have been 4 year Governors, or more, with the exception of Governor Benson.
- The cost of running for office has gotten obscene and I don't see it changing in the future. You spend as much as time running for office and looking for money as you spend governing.
- The average cost of running for State Senate, a job that pays \$100 a year, is \$100,000. We know how much time it takes to raise that money and we don't want people who are only independently wealthy running for office.
- The first two years of governing is a learning experience. By the time an elected official has an agenda in place they have to run for office again.
- My own feeling is that State Representatives should be a two-year term, but this is currently drafted to cover everyone.
- I want to specify that this doesn't increase our pay; it doubles it to account for 4 years.

Sen. Soucy

- (Q) You mentioned savings for campaigns. Have you looked into savings for cities, towns, and the state as well?
 - (A) **Sen. Lasky:** I haven't looked into it specifically, but it is a lot of work for our cities and towns and I assume there would be some savings.

Sen. Birdsell

- (Q) Wouldn't this make it worse locking people in for 4 years instead of 2 years, since only the wealthy can afford that?
 - (A) **Sen. Lasky:** I think that's a good point for keeping State Representatives at 2-year terms. However, I believe a lot of State Representatives stay for more than one term.
- (Q) People have asked me about recall, which we don't have because we only have 2-year terms. With 4-year terms, would we want to implement some sort of recall process?
 - (A) **Sen. Lasky:** I haven't thought about that. If you don't like someone in office then 4 years can feel like an eternity, but we've all been there.
- (Q) Why start in 2020?
 - (A) **Sen. Lasky:** It would have to be on the ballot for 2018 to be implemented in 2020.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Darryl Perry – CEO, Liberty Lobby LLC

- CACR 10 in the House in 2015 would have extended Governor to 4-year terms. Some concerns were that it makes the Governor less responsive to the people and that there is no recall provision.
- This bill would make every office 4-year terms and would not implement a recall. Some states will stagger elections, but that creates issues with redistricting.
- It will allow elected officials to be less responsive to the people.
- This will create a costly scenario where state elections would be in the presidential years but midterm elections would elect county offices and U.S. representatives. This would cost an unjustifiable amount of money.

Sen. Sanborn

- (Q) How do you feel about term limits?
 - (A) **Darryl Perry:** I'd want to take a look at it before making a determination.

Neutral Information Presented: None

Future Action: Pending

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Date Hearing Report completed: February 22, 2017