

## **Q26 – Why do U.S. representatives serve shorter terms than U.S. senators?**

**DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:**

Representatives serve shorter terms than senators – two years versus six years – so they will more closely follow public opinion ... the will of the people.

The Framers never envisioned Representatives serving for decades – but many do. In recent years, nine out of ten members have been re-elected.

Only four times in the past century has the re-election rate dipped below 80 percent. And it dropped below 70 percent only once, and that was during the Great Depression.

Incumbents are typically better known than challengers – and better funded. And they can craft legislation to benefit the district.

Representative John Dingell, Jr., so excelled at looking after his constituents, he spent 59 years in the House: the longest-serving member of Congress ever. And he was preceded by his father and succeeded by his wife. That kind of tenure is cited by advocates of term limits. Opponents argue we already have term limits; we call them elections. The Framers trusted we the people to decide when it's time for a change.