

Term limits win big; Chambers will fight

Term Limits

96% of precincts reporting

For 68%
Against 32%

By Kara G. Morrison
Senior Editor

Nebraskans for Term Limits got their wish on Tuesday.

For the second time in two years, Nebraska voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of a constitutional amendment limiting the number of congressional and state terms Nebraska politicians could serve.

With 96 percent of the precincts reporting, 68 percent of Nebraskans had voted in favor of term limits. Thirty-two percent of voters opposed limiting terms.

Maine, Nevada and the District of Columbia also voted Tuesday for congressional term limits. These states and Nebraska will join the 16 other states that already have term limit laws.

Meanwhile, Nebraskans returned two multiple-term Republican incumbents—3rd District Rep. Bill Barrett and 1st District Rep. Doug Bereuter—to Washington. Barrett will serve his third term in the House, while Bereuter will return for his ninth.

Ally Milder of Nebraskans for Term Limits received the victory with joy but little surprise.

"We feel really good about it," Milder said of the 67 percent margin. "It's the first step toward political reform in the state."

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, a leading opponent of term limits, also wasn't surprised that the term limit amendment passed.

Chambers said he predicted all along that term limits would pass "overwhelmingly." He said the actual percentage voting in favor of the amendment was lower than the 82

percent he had expected.

Yet, he said the vote didn't guarantee the amendment's enactment. Nebraskans' first vote to adopt term limits was thrown out when the number of petition signatures needed was miscalculated in 1992.

"This vote doesn't really mean anything, because I believe it will ultimately be overturned," Chambers said.

Chambers said he would file an appeal on the amendment with the Nebraska Supreme Court in the next 30 days to challenge a decision made Monday by Lancaster County District Judge Paul Merritt.

Merritt on Monday rejected 12 challenges of the petition filed by Chambers, Tim Duggan, John Hasenaur and Lincoln City Councilman Ken Haar. Merritt ruled the initiative petition complied with state law.

Chambers said the draft of the provision was filled with flaws, which violated the standards required to produce the ballot amendment.

Though Chambers said he thought the amendment would be struck down, Milder said she was confident Nebraskans for Term Limits would win any appeals.

"We feel it was a strong opinion issued by (Judge Merritt)," Milder said. She said the strong voter approval also would help their cause.

Milder maintains that term limits will even the playing field in politics by eliminating career politicians and giving citizens a greater role in government.

Chambers said the argument was nonsense.

"Serious people who understand it takes time to become effective in an office will not waste their time running," he said. He said the term limits would encourage only those interested in personal gain and those easily swayed by special interests to run for office.

Chambers said the vote reflected the average citizen's misunderstanding of government and inability to think deeply about public issues.

Stoney

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and volunteers gathered at her post-election party that it was time to move to other battles. She said voters had spoken with a voice that carried across the state.

"We must not think this campaign was in vain," Stoney said.

She said the campaign showed Kerrey what Nebraskans thought about health care and tax increases.

If she persuaded one person who normally would not vote to make a statement about what kind of government represents Nebraskans, then her campaign was successful, Stoney said.

Stoney asked her faithful backers to support Kerrey and said America couldn't move forward with the politics of division.

America should be a beacon of democracy for the world, Stoney said. She said citizens should be able to live here without the burden of government intervention and unsafe streets.

Stoney also thanked all the Nebraskans who voted.

"That's what makes this the best country in the world," Stoney said. "I believe individuals do count."

She said the campaign did the best it could with the resources it had.

"We knew that in the beginning it was going to be a challenge," Stoney said. "An incumbent is a tough thing to overcome."

Andy Abboud, Stoney's campaign manager, said he was disappointed with the results of the election but proud the campaign began and finished with dignity.

"There are not going to be any sour grapes from the Stoney campaign," he said.

Kerrey was a tough opponent, Abboud said. Campaigners did everything they could.

Delores Dunn said she and her husband, Bob, both of Lincoln, had volunteered to campaign from the beginning. She said Stoney's loss was a disappointment.

Kerrey

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"The difficulty in being in politics today is the fear of telling the truth. Not that there's a disagreement ... but others are trying to gain a political advantage. The most difficult part is not reaching an ideological agreement ... it's political."

Kerrey said he saw his role in the Senate as a responsibility and an opportunity. Having two Nebraska senators with seniority gives the state a greater opportunity to shape the direction of the nation in the coming years.

Kerrey said the race was tougher than he expected. He said he wished the campaign had not taken the tone it did during the final weeks, but it

was unavoidable.

Mike Fahey, chairman of Kerrey's campaign, said he would remember this race for a long time. Unfortunately, he said, that's because it was one of the most negative he has been involved with.

Kerrey said the campaign advertisements that ran during past weeks cast the race in a negative light. But Kerrey said the resulting 10-percent-point win was a big one.

The senator said he would focus on entitlement spending in his upcoming term, along with health care and welfare reform and education.

"This evening I say to you that Nebraska must accept responsibility to lead in Washington, D.C.," Kerrey said. "And I join you with great sincerity to lead that charge."



Gov. Ben Nelson, center, is congratulated by a supporter while his wife Diane, left, watches. Nelson defeated Republican challenger Gene Spence Tuesday night.

Nelson

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He also said Nelson tried to run a positive campaign.

"We're very proud we were able to win without running one single negative advertisement," Foster said.

Scott Holthus, Nelson's cam-

paign coordinator for the state's 3rd District, said the governor made a strong showing in western Nebraska. He said Nelson's campaign in the Republican-dominated district focused on his strengths as governor.

"He's done such a good job in the last four years," Holthus said. "It's easy to focus on his accom-

plishments. We were up strong early on, and we just kept the pressure on. There was no way his opponent could overcome that."

Nebraska Sen. James Exon also spoke at Nelson's victory party.

"What a great, big, wonderful victory for a great, big, wonderful governor," Exon said.

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