

## Term Limits

**ISSUE:** South Dakota Farm Bureau's position on term limits for state legislators.

**OVERVIEW:** South Dakota's Constitution currently imposes term limits for state legislators. The Constitution restricts a legislator from serving no more than four consecutive terms or eight years in one legislative chamber (Senate or House of Representatives). This measure was passed by South Dakota voters in 1992 with 63% in favor to 36% against. SDFB originally supported the 1992 constitutional amendment because it contained provisions affecting South Dakota's congressional delegation. After the measure was passed, a court ruled the congressional delegation was not subject to the constitutional amendment. Following the ruling, SDFB's county delegates revisited the policy and voted to oppose term limits for only South Dakota legislators.

Within the boundaries of current law, South Dakota legislators can serve longer than 16 years. The key detail in the Constitution is consecutive. A legislator may serve eight years in the Senate, run for the House of Representatives for eight years or less, and then return to the Senate. For example, South Dakota has a legislator who has served for 22 years by moving back and forth between the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## CONSIDERATIONS:

1. South Dakota Farm Bureau currently has policy opposing term limits for state legislators; however, it has been approximately 30 years since Farm Bureau has revisited this policy.
2. There is a push to reduce term limits to eight years in the Senate and eight years in the House of Representatives. The maximum amount of time to serve in the Legislature would be 16 years.
3. Proponents of reducing legislative terms argue, "We don't really have genuine systemic term limits; they're more like term suggestions."

**SDFB POLICY:** Current SDFB policy opposes term limits for South Dakota legislators.

**DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS:**

1. Does South Dakota Farm Bureau want term limits to include a maximum of 16 years: eight years (four terms) in each chamber. Is this the correct amount of time?
2. Arguments exist that reducing the amount of time for legislators to serve, removes institutional knowledge and empowers bureaucrats and lobbyists. What is Farm Bureau's position on this statement?
3. Candidate recruitment can be difficult in South Dakota. Would imposing stricter term limits encourage more people to run for public office?
4. Does South Dakota Farm Bureau support term limits at the federal level? If so, how many terms are included in the limit? Are the House and Senate treated differently?