



BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Equity and Structure

Bill 20-0551

Charter Amendment – Term Limits

Sponsor: Council President behalf of The Administration

Introduced: July 6, 2020

Purpose:

For the purpose of providing that a person who has served a certain number of terms as Mayor, Comptroller, President of the City Council, or Member of the City Council is ineligible to again serve in that office during the immediately following term; correcting, clarifying, and conforming related provisions; and submitting this amendment to the qualified voters of the City for adoption or rejection.

Effective: Upon the approval of the legal and qualified voters of Baltimore City.

Agency Reports

Department of Law	
Department of Finance	Not Favorable
Office of the Comptroller	No Position
Elected Officials Retirement System	No Position

Analysis

Current Law:

Article III – City Council: Section 1(b) and 3 (a); Article IV – Mayor, Section 1(a)(3); Article V – Comptroller, Sections 1(a)(5), Baltimore City Charter (1996 Edition)

If enacted, Bill 20-0551 Charter Amendment – Term Limits would create language in the Baltimore City Charter that establishes term limits for the elected position of Mayor, City Council President, Comptroller and City Council members. In Article III, IV, and V the below stated language would be added:

“After December 9, 2020, a person who has been popularly elected to serve 2 consecutive terms as a (member of the City Council, Comptroller, President, or Mayor) is ineligible to again serve as a member during the term that immediately follows those 2 terms.”

Instituting term limits would put a legal restriction in place that limits the number of years an incumbent can serve in an elected office. Term limits help to establish statutory limitations to ensure that the same individual(s) are not in the same public office for more than a specific number of years. Also, by establishing a framework for how long an individual(s) can hold one specific position it precludes that officeholder from accumulating and yielding a certain degree of power within their respective branch of government, which can help to prevent an abuse of power.

On a national level a small percentage of cities limit the length of time that a mayor or councilmember can stay in office. Currently, some of the major metropolitan cities that do have term limits are New York City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Houston and San Antonio.

Arguments in favor of term limits	Arguments against term limits
Increases ratio of competitive elections	Promotes loss of experience
Brings in more opportunities to serve in public office	Inexperienced leaders will be easy prey for special interest groups
Curbs the influence of lobbyist	Term limits remove popular leaders
Term limits will produce a “citizen legislature” of more ordinary people rather than professional politicians.	Term limits are undemocratic as they conflict with the will of the voters
It will promote fresh ideas	Term limits negatively affect the types of projects that elected leaders implement, and the continuity of those projects
Incumbency promotes more spending and bureaucracy	

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: Not Available

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Charter, Agency Reports

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