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# Mansfield Favors a Single 6-Year Term to Separate Presidency From Politics

BY MIKE MANSFIELD

The political processes of America are undergoing a degree of stress and strain today, the likes of which seldom, if ever, have been witnessed in the nation's history.

It is in such an atmosphere, however, that I have chosen to raise anew the proposal to change the Constitution so as to limit the Presidency to a single term of six years—and have introduced a resolution calling for a constitutional amendment to that effect.

Without attempting to assess blame or liability, it is only in terms of the political circumstances in which the nation now finds itself that the merits of this proposal can be so clearly viewed.

There is no more compelling argument for this proposal than that which says every step must be taken that serves to divorce the office of the Presidency from the arena of the political campaign. A single term of six years—or five or seven—would assist such an end.

With that said, I would note that in recent years there have been a number of significant amendments to the Constitution.

Correcting the matter of presidential succession and, particularly, extending the franchise of the ballot to young adults represent enormous strides forward—actions that, in my judgment, serve to protect and enhance the democratic processes of this nation.

It is in this same context of constitutional evolution that I urge a single presidential term of six years. Such a change would preserve for future generations the complete integrity of this nation's highest office.

Though the suggestion for this constitutional change has been receiving fresh attention, it is not to be flippant that new ground is being broken.

Indeed, the suggestion of a single six-year term has been with us ever since the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 thrashed over the issue of a President's term and his eligibility for reelection (see box).

In this day and age, it is just intolerable that a President is compelled to devote his time, energy, efforts and talents to what can be characterized only as purely political campaign tasks.

I do not refer solely to a President's own reelection campaign. To be sure, a reelection effort and all it entails are burdens enough.

But a President facing reelection faces as well a host of demands—from attending the needs of political

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BY ERNEST B. FURGUERSON  
BOLIGEE, Ala. — Crossing the state line out of Mississippi, I slowed for troops sorting out the remains of a wreck between a car speeding down U.S. 11 and another easing out of a red-dirt farm road. The announcer on the Meridian radio station was doing the early news, reporting that Mr. Nixon was on his way to Norfolk to "speak to unin-

formed (sic) contingents from all the services" on Armed Forces Day. Passing the drive-in theater across the road from the palm reader's trailer between York and Livingston — the theater's screen facing roadward, and after nightfall showing "The Erotic Adventures of Zorro" and "That'll Blow" — I watched another car with a bumper sticker reading "What About Our MIAs?" whip past. A few minutes later, I waited at the caution blinker, then turned off the highway into Boligee. A train blocked the road through town. Two giant green mechanical cotton pickers kept me from making a U-turn, so I waited, in a town that had a population of 168 the last time the big gazetteer counted and, unlike Hueytown, Wetumpka and Little Shawmut, still is not populous enough to be listed in my traveling almanac. When I left town, there was a pickup going the other way with the same sign, "What About Our MIAs?" Two more such stickers showed up around the courthouse square in Utaw, the seat of black-run Greene County, which is surrounded these days by cattle haunch-deep in thick grass—one of the few positive results of the record rains and flooding of this spring. It is hardly an accident that President Nixon used the Norfolk Naval Base, the Meridian Mississippi Na-

val Air Center and his own White House lawn for three of his rare public appearances of late. Or that he zeroed in on the same subject in all three places: the POWs come home, the MIAs still missing and the "Peace With Honor" that still accompanies all official talk about them. Some of us take our public-opinion polls by counting bumper stickers and talking to waitresses in barbecue joints. Mr. Nixon does it more scientifically. But we obviously reached the same conclusion, which is that in areas like the black belt along the Alabama-Mississippi line, the issue that threatens the President's very continuance in office is still too complicated to sink in among the pickup-driving public. Perhaps after the Senate hearings have hammered home the facts more or less firsthand, that will change. But for now, martial pride and a resentful hangover from the war are more evident. Witness, in addition to the bumper stickers, the desk woman by the prettiest Jayce wives in Meridian at the stadium during a country-music concert. Signs flanking them demand, "Where is Herbert Lumsford?" and "Where is Wimble Lewis?" and the ladies have no trouble collecting long lists of signatures on petitions seeking answers about

these and other regional servicemen still unaccounted for in Indochina. That is why Mr. Nixon talked about the POWs and their slogan, "Home With Honor," when he dedicated the John Stennis Center at the Meridian Naval Air Station. That is why he went to Norfolk to lecture the North Vietnamese about their "gravelly defied adherence to the armistice provision for full information on missing Americans." In the same speech, he emphasized the dignity and external responsibility of his office, reminding his listeners that he is "Commander in Chief" and "head of state." And that, of course, is why he and Bob Hope played host to all the returned POWs who would accept his invitation to the gala advance Memorial Day party on the South Lawn. It is an understandable diversion, yes, but it also is responsive to what seems uppermost in the nonbaseball, nonspring-crops brain compartments of the voters in this part of the country. They used to be hard-shell Democrats, after all, but last year they were the hard-core of his landslide reelection. The main reason for their support was his stand on the POWs, the prisoners and the flag. He knew that then and, even without driving up U.S. 11, he knows it now. And he must be wishing that life really was that simple.

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## The Founding Fathers Were Divided



George Washington addresses the 1787 convention; Benjamin Franklin sits at left, holding cane; James Madison stands in center.

During the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, held from May to September, 1787, the duration of a President's terms was a hotly debated issue, and so was the frequency with which he might run for reelection. A record was kept by James Madison, whose running account appears this way in the Journal of the Debates:

Thursday, July 19. In Convention.

On the question Shall the Executive continue for 7 years? It passed in the negative. Mas. divd. Cont. ay. N.J. no. Pa. no. Del. no. Md. no. Va. no. N.C. divd. S.C. ay. Geo. ay.

Mr. King was afraid he shd. shorten the term too much. Mr. Govr. Morris was for a short term, in order to avoid impeachments which wd be otherwise necessary.

Mr. Butler was agt. the frequency of the elections. Geo. & S.C. were too distant to send electors often. Mr. Ellsworth was for 6 years. If the elections be too frequent,

the Executive will not be firm eno. There must be duties which will make him unpopular for the moment. There will be OUNTS as well as INS. His administration will therefore be attacked and misrepresented. Mr. Williamson was for 6 years. The expense will be considerable & ought not to be unnecessarily repeated. If the Elections are too frequent, the best men will not undertake the service and those of an inferior character will be liable to be corrupted.

On the question of 6 years? Mas. ay. Cont. ay. N.J. ay. Pa. ay. Del. no. Md. ay. Va. ay. N.C. ay. S.C. ay. Geo. ay. Adjourned.

Thursday, July 24th. In Convention.

Mr. Gerry. That the Executive shd. be independent of the Legislature is a clear point. The longer the duration of his appointment the more will his dependence be diminished. It will be better than for him to continue

10, 15, or even 20 years and be ineligible afterwards. Mr. King was for making him re-eligible. This is too great an advantage to be given up for the small effect it will have on his dependence. If impeachments are to lie. He considered these as rendering the tenure during pleasure.

Mr. L. Martin, suspending his motion as to the ineligibility, moved that the appointment of the Executive shall continue for Eleven years. Mr. Gerry suggested fifteen years.

Mr. King twenty years. This is the medium life of princes . . . On this motion

Thursday, Sept. 6, 1787. In Convention.

Mr. Hamilton said that he had been restrained from entering into the discussions by his dislike of the Scheme of Govt. in General, but as he meant to support the plan to be recommended, as better than nothing, he wished in this place to offer a few remarks. He liked the new

modification, on the whole, better than that in the printed Report. In this the President was a Monster elected for seven years, and ineligible afterwards; having great powers, in appointments to office, & continually tempted by this constitutional disqualification to abuse them in order to subvert the Government. Although he should be made re-eligible, still if appointed by the Legislature, he would be tempted to make use of corrupt influence to be continued in office. Mr. Spaight and Mr. Williamson moved to insert "seven" instead of "four" years for the term of the President— On this motion

N.H. ay. Mas. no. Ct. no. N.J. no. Pa. no. Del. no. Md. no. Va. ay. N.C. ay. S.C. no. Geo. no.

Mr. Spaight & Mr. Williamson, then moved to insert "six," instead of "four." On which motion

N.H. no. Mas. no. Ct. no. N.J. no. Pa. no. Del. no. Md. no. Va. no. N.C. ay. S.C. ay. Geo. no.

On the term "four" all the States were ay, except N. Carolina, no.

officeholders, office seekers, financial backers and all the rest, to riding herd on the day-to-day developments within the pedestrian partisan arena. Surely this amendment does not

represent a panacea for these ills which have grown up with our system of democracy. But along with an effective public financing law for elections, it would go far, I think, in freeing an incumbent President from unnecessary political burdens.

To a great extent, such a change would allow the President to devote a far greater measure of his time to the enormous task of serving the people. Accordingly, more time would be

provided for policy-making and policy-implementing, for initiating programs and for shaping and directing his administration. More time would be provided as well for the kind of experimentation

## MIAs Still Play the Political Lead Roles in Some Areas

BY ERNEST B. FURGUERSON  
BOLIGEE, Ala. — Crossing the state line out of Mississippi, I slowed for troops sorting out the remains of a wreck between a car speeding down U.S. 11 and another easing out of a red-dirt farm road. The announcer on the Meridian radio station was doing the early news, reporting that Mr. Nixon was on his way to Norfolk to "speak to unin-

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## In New Hampshire, a Financial Experiment to Allow Educational Choice

BY JAMES J. KILPATRICK  
Here in New Hampshire, the state motto is "Live Free or Die." If U.S. authorities approve—and that is a very iffy question—several thousand school-age children in New Hampshire will embark next fall on a great experiment in living free. They would be the subjects of the first true test of a "tuition voucher" system. In one form or another, the system has been proposed since the days of Adam Smith. It was Smith's idea that the education of children is a mixed public and parental responsibility; he advocated public financing and parental choice. More recently

such poles-apart philosophers as Milton Friedman of Chicago and Christopher Jencks of Harvard have urged the same basic plan. The plan makes great good sense. Somewhat oversimplified, it rests on these propositions: that the state has a proper interest in the education of children; that, within reasonable limits, the state should not dictate the kind of education a child receives, and that, within a community, all children of school age are entitled to identical shares of public funds available for education. Suppose, then, that a community has \$500,000 to spend on education, and suppose that it has 1,000 chil-

dren of school age. The plan proposes that each child be allocated \$500, in the form of a tuition voucher to be used by his parents according to their own free choice. The parents can send the child to any accredited school, public or private, anywhere in the community, the state or the nation. The goal is not public-school education; the goal is plainly and simply education. Some years ago, as a part of its massive resistance to school integration, Virginia experimented with a state-financed program along these lines. The Virginia plan did not permit the tuition grants to be used in church-operated schools—it was felt that this would violate the state con-

stitution—but otherwise it provided complete freedom of choice. Contrary to the apprehensions of many public school superintendents, the plan did not wreck the public schools or significantly diminish their funds. Contrary to the hopes of many libertarians, relatively few parents chose to participate. But until the Supreme Court killed the plan, preserving it as a mere device to preserve segregation, the program offered a choice. New Hampshire wants to have a go at freedom. For some months, a committee of top educators, assisted by Prof. Friedman, has been preparing a model for an effectively unlimited tuition voucher experiment.

The group has worked closely with the Office of Economic Opportunity, which has a severely limited experiment now under way in the Alum Rock school district of California. At Alum Rock, parents cannot make the fundamental choice of public or private education; they can choose only among six public elementary schools. New Hampshire would provide a truly free choice. William Bittenbender, chairman of the New Hampshire Board of Education, is enthusiastically backing the experiment. Dr. Newell Faire, state commissioner of education, wants to see a test started this fall. The state board voted 5 to 1 last month to give it a try.

The Education Committee of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, in an informal poll, found 22 members for and only 2 against a pilot project. Gov. Meldrin Thomson has voted strong support. As soon as a final decision is reached on the one or two communities that would participate, an application will be made to the U.S. Office of Education for grants of \$2.5 million a year for at least two years. If these were then extended for an additional two years, by the spring of 1978 some useful data could be examined. The amount of money, relatively speaking, is small; the benefits of a pilot project are potentially great.