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Timothy Zick

William & Mary Law School, tzick@wm.edu

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The Crash and a Third Bloomberg Term

Posted By [Timothy Zick](#) On September 30, 2008 @ 5:06 pm In [Politics](#) | [1 Comment](#)

So Mayor Michael Bloomberg [wants a third term](#) ^[1]. Unfortunately, New York voters have twice passed term limits laws. No matter. Hizzoner apparently plans to end-run the voters and have the City Council, many of whose members are also term-limited, to revise the term limits law. While detractors say the mayor should honor the term limits (he once called an effort to overturn them “disgusting”), supporters of a third Bloomberg term suggest that in this time of “crisis” the city needs his steady hand.

I have no particular bone to pick with Mayor Bloomberg. As far as I could tell from my stint living in Brooklyn, he did a fine job. He’s a popular mayor — today. But the hypocritical and self-serving nature of this decision is extraordinary. Apparently, Bloomberg believed that term limits were necessary — until he was subject to them. This was the story in April: “The mayor is absolutely not seeking a third term,” said Bloomberg spokesman Stu Loeser. Asked if the mayor would promise to leave at the end of 2009, Loeser replied, “Yes.” Then came the crash. So limits on incumbency must give way to the great financial crisis? Yes, say supporters of a third term. Only Bloomberg — and of course the rest of the term-limited officials who would benefit from the revision — can save us now.

Is it any wonder the public is cynical about its political leaders? It’s as if they think the world could not get along without them. Worse, *fear* has now become a common — and for many an accepted — rationale for continued governance. Just as a terrorist attack requires that we “stay the course,” so too does a financial crisis. Here’s a populist notion: Politicians should get over themselves. Instead, they are acting more and more like aging athletes. When the lights start to fade, they seek an “I’m back!” moment. True, some such comebacks have been successful. But others have failed miserably. The team generally seems to get along fine without the departed star. As for term limits themselves, there may well be sound public policy arguments on both sides of the issue. But at this point they are the law in the city. At the very least, officeholders should respect their constituents enough to allow *them* to decide whether twice deciding to impose incumbency restrictions was a mistake. It’s no answer that they could vote Bloomberg out — entrenched incumbency and its advantages are among the principal reasons term limits exist.

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[1] wants a third term:

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