

proven off the mark. Lobbyists haven't gained the upper hand, Greenblatt notes. "Term limits have been a mixed bag for lobbyists, who must introduce themselves to a new, skeptical set of legislators every couple of years. . . . Nor is there much evidence that legislative staff have taken advantage of member turnover to impose their own views on inexperienced legislators." Staff turnover is often as great as turnover among lawmakers.

Among the legislators, staff, lobbyists, and reporters who work in the state capitals, however, the opinion is "nearly universal . . . that term limits are obstacles to careful legislation and effective oversight," reports Greenblatt. "Travel a bit farther from the capital, though, and you get a different point of view." As political scientist Alan Rosenthal, of Rutgers University, puts it: "The public voted initially for term limits because they don't like politicians and political institutions. That disfavor has continued."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Partied Out

THE SOURCE: "Public Images of Political Parties: A Necessary Evil?" by Russell J. Dalton and Steven A. Weldon, in *West European Politics*, Nov. 2005.

WHAT'S WIDELY CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL to representative democracy, yet looked upon with growing distrust in modern democracies? The political party. No one's writing its obituary yet, but the distrust has some unsettling implications, argue Russell J. Dalton, a political scientist at the University of California, Irvine, and Steven A. Weldon, a graduate student there.

The pervasive distrust is obvious in opinion polls. Respondents in 17 of 20

In the European Union, the public judged political parties less trustworthy than corporations.

Western democracies surveyed in 2004 identified political parties as the institutions most affected by corruption. In surveys conducted between 1996 and 2000 in 13 advanced industrial democracies, only 30 percent of those polled (38 percent in the United States) said they believed that parties care what ordinary people think.

It's not only the parties that are in bad odor with the public. But in the European Union, the public judged political parties the least trustworthy of a long list of institutions in annual surveys between 1997 and 2004. They won the trust of only an average of 17 percent of the EU population. Even big corporations, with the second-lowest trust level,

did much better than that, passing muster with 33 percent of those polled.

What difference does the distrust make? It reduces voter turnout, for one thing. Still, most people who are cynical about political parties continue to go to the polls. Some in Denmark and elsewhere opt for far-right "antiparty" parties. (Far-left parties seem to have much less appeal to distrustful voters except in countries where there's no far-right alternative, such as Sweden.) Most distrusters tend to hold their noses and vote for an established party, usually one that's out of power. In the 1996–2000 surveys of 13 industrial democracies, only 16 percent of the distrusters did not vote. In the United States, however, that number rose to 30 percent.

Particular national conditions and scandals explain some of what's occurring, but the spreading dissatisfaction is "a general pattern across the Western democracies," say Dalton and Weldon.



Distrust of political parties is not confined to the United States. In one survey of people in advanced democracies, only 30 percent said that the parties care what ordinary people think.

That dissatisfaction has spurred electoral reforms in the United States (e.g., term limits), Italy, Japan, New Zealand, and elsewhere. It's also prompting "more involvement in non-partisan forms of political action," such as citizen interest groups and referendums. And, the authors believe, it will eventually lead to louder demands for direct citizen involvement in the details of policy administration. This "public skepticism about political parties is one piece of a general syndrome involving the public's growing doubts about representative democracy, and a search for other democratic forms."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Senile Justice?

THE SOURCE: "Life Tenure on the Supreme Court: Time for a Change?" by Kevin T. McGuire, in *Judicature*, July–Aug. 2005.

THE RECENT APPOINTMENTS OF 50-year-old John G. Roberts and 55-year-old Samuel Alito reduced the previous 8–1 majority of senior citizens on the Supreme Court, but in the age of ever-lengthening life spans, the worry that justices stay on the bench far too long

isn't likely to go away. The Founding Fathers, acting when life expectancy was less than 40 years, could hardly have foreseen the danger that lifetime tenure might mean a superannuated Court rarely refreshed by new appointments.

Yet a hard look at the historical record shows that the danger is exaggerated, contends Kevin T. McGuire, a political scientist at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Before 80-year-old Chief Justice William Rehnquist's death last year, the median age of the justices was 69. That was only five years more than the Court's average median age since the dawn of the 20th century.

What about length of service? Rehnquist served 33 years, one of the Court's 10 longest tenures in history, and retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, 75, served only a decade less than he did. The median length of service for sitting justices before the recent departures was 18 years. Before the Civil War, the median length of service reached a high of 24 years. Since 1869, when Congress began offering financial support to justices who retired, the median length of service has seldom

exceeded 15 years, so rookies Roberts and Alito return the Court close to the historical norm.

From the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, justices generally were appointed in their mid-50s, leaving the Court when they were about 70 years old, often only at death. Of the justices appointed since the 1950s, all those who left the Court before Rehnquist went willingly into retirement—but at the more advanced median age of 77. Even so, that is not much different from the age-75 maximum that reformers have proposed be adopted by constitutional amendment.

All in all, McGuire concludes, the historical evidence indicates there's no need to tinker with lifetime tenure for Supreme Court justices. But if Congress decides it wants to speed up turnover on the Court, a much simpler remedy is at hand: Just offer justices who step down before they reach age 75 or complete 15 years of service the opportunity to retire at twice their current salary. Let the record show that the pension bait of 1869 revealed that even the lofty Supremes aren't immune to financial incentives.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

High Tech's Log Cabin

THE SOURCE: "A Garage and an Idea: What More Does an Entrepreneur Need?" by Pino G. Audia and Christopher I. Rider, in *California Management Review*, Fall 2005.

"BIRTHPLACE OF SILICON VALLEY" reads the plaque outside one of California's official historic landmarks: a

garage on Addison Avenue in Palo Alto where, in 1938, the cofounders of Hewlett-Packard began their ascent to fame and fortune. It's a sacred item of American mythology that big dreams are born in humble places. The Walt Disney Company, Apple Computer,

and Mattel all have garages in their pasts, and other firms can boast a basement (United Parcel Service), a dorm room (Dell Computer), or a kitchen (Lillian Vernon) in theirs. Indeed, business school students in one recent survey estimated that nearly half the entrepreneurs in the country get started that way.

That estimate is way too high, say Pino G. Audia and Christopher I. Rider, a professor of organizational behavior and a graduate student,