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politicians.’ Or in the mirror.” – USTL President, Philip Blumel*

## **U.S. Term Limits President Labels Obama Attack on Congressional Term Limits “Utter Nonsense”**

August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Fairfax, VA—U.S. Term Limits president Philip Blumel today called Barack Obama’s recent attack on term limits “utter nonsense,” adding that the putative Democrat presidential nominee “needs to stick to topics on which he has shown real expertise, like rent collecting and designing logos.”

Blumel’s statement came in response to Obama’s recent reply to a question about the need for term limits on members of Congress. Obama, labeling the question “kind of tricky” said, “I’m generally not in favor of term limits. Nobody is term-limiting the lobbyists or the slick operators walking around the halls of Congress. I believe in one form of term limits. They’re called elections.”

Taking strong issue both with Obama’s analysis and with his understanding of the issue, USTL’s Blumel said, “As is the case on so many issues about which he has made similar ill-informed pronouncements, Mr. Obama needs to do his homework before he portrays himself as an authority.”

Explained Blumel, “In the first place, to compare lobbyists with politicians is utter nonsense. Lobbyists are nothing more than supplicants. That’s why they’re stuck in the lobby, while Mr. Obama and his cronies own the building. For him to make believe that he doesn’t know the difference between favor seekers and power brokers is insincere -- and insulting. As to ‘slick operators walking around the halls of Congress,’ Mr. Obama needs to look in the dictionary under ‘career politicians.’ Or in the mirror.

“As to elections being the only form of term limits in which he believes,” Blumel continued, “that’s pithy, glib -- and thoroughly duplicitous. As an incumbent, Mr. Obama knows full well that members of Congress have now skewed the laws to give themselves a virtual guarantee of a lifetime job. And as the self-appointed apostle of change, he ought to be taking the lead to change all that inequity.”

Blumel pointed to figures showing that in November of 2006, of the 407 members of the U.S. House of Representatives seeking reelection, 383 were returned to office. That translates into better than a 94% success rate. In the U.S. Senate, 23 of 29 (79%) incumbents running for office were reelected.

“Mr. Obama is undoubtedly well aware of these figures,” Blumel said, “just as he is well aware of the advantages incumbents have given themselves to render it all but impossible for sitting members to lose elections. That’s why he wants to make sure the pernicious system as it now exists remains sacrosanct.”

Blumel said that since the 1960s, when members of Congress voted to substantially enlarge their personal staffs, such staffs – both in Washington and in the states and districts – have largely become campaign organizations. According to the *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, since that time, the advantage of incumbency has increased to roughly 7 to 10 percentage points of the vote.

“Mr. Obama also knows that incumbency inordinately provides sitting members with a vast – virtually insurmountable -- monetary advantage over challengers,” Blumel said. “And he should stop trying to fool people into thinking it doesn’t.”

In 2006, on average, a candidate challenging an incumbent House member in 2006 was outspent by more than \$600,000. The average Senate challenger was outspent by more than \$2 million.

“Will Rodgers once observed that ‘Everybody is ignorant, only about different things,’” Blumel concluded. “Mr. Obama would do well to refrain from pontificating on those things about which his ignorance is overwhelmingly obvious. He needs to stick to topics on which he has shown real expertise, like rent collecting and designing logos.”

In response to Senator Obama's statements, U.S. Term Limits has launched a citizens petition to place term limits on the US Congress. To view and sign the petition, visit <http://www.termlimits.org>

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*U.S. Term Limits is a non-partisan, non-profit advocacy organization that works to promote term limits at all levels of government. For more information or to arrange an interview, please call Ray Wotring at 703-383-0907. U.S. Term Limits is a nonprofit501 (c) (4). It is located at 9900 Main Street, Suite 303 Fairfax, VA 22031 [info@ustl.org](mailto:info@ustl.org)*