

*By James Walker*

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# Terms? Newcomers may be a better bet than career politicians

During the past two weeks, I have been busy answering emails and talking with readers about my last two columns regarding politicians and the media.

The columns focused on U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal and U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, both Democrats, and whether there should be term limits — and also how big a role the media plays in making career politicians of our elected officials.

One thing is clear: I am not the only one who is seeing less and less value in career politicians and wondering whether we couldn't get the same — or even better — results from the young and ambitious eager to have our vote.

Because we don't seem to be getting a lot of bang casting our vote for the same people over and over.

I think you only have to look around and see we are still stalled at the gate.

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“It is pretty obvious that both of them enjoy the limelight and if they are not in it, nothing gets done,” wrote a reader from Fairfield. “They love the camera and the attention ... and it also seems that they pick and choose who they help and who gets left in the dust. No one should have positions that long in public office and that includes judges and speakers of the house.”

Without a doubt, there is a disconnect between what we expect from our elected officials and what we are getting.

Maybe as laypeople, we don't understand what representation is or how we are represented or exactly how things work in Washington.

But we do understand what for voters are the basics: shelter and meat and potatoes on the dinner table.

And while the nation is currently in a crisis that has these basics under threat, this was happening long before COVID-19 came along — even though that is the convenient excuse for everything these days.

For me, what it comes down to is what they say when they are being sworn-in and place their hand on the Bible and swear to uphold the Constitution.

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I believe they have forgotten that the preamble to the Constitution starts with “We the People” and, for too many politicians, “we” has become “me.”

The real question becomes, who is benefiting the most from them walking the halls of Congress for decades: them or us?

That is not an easy answer, no matter how you feel about the current state of our representation.

We may not think he does much in the way of improving the lives of Connecticut citizens, but you would still be hard-pressed to say Blumenthal is not front and center on what is happening in Connecticut.

Whether day or night, when something happens in this state, Blumenthal is there to lend his support.

So, there is no question that the man works very hard.

Then why do we feel we’re not seeing the benefits?

The answer lies in everyday life.

Many neighborhoods have not changed for the better in decades; jobs are still scarce despite giving out tens of millions of taxpayer dollars (all with

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get-out-of-the-deal loopholes) to businesses that are supposed to create well-paying jobs that never happen.

We still have too many people on breadlines, parents marching for equal education funding and people living on the streets or on the verge of homelessness because “the rent is too damn high.”

To me, if our elected officials can do nothing to reverse these problems that affect us every day, then why do we need them to stick around term after term?

That is a reasonable question.

Because at some point, all that is happening are the resumes of our elected officials continue to get a boost as their names gain nationwide recognition that have them chairing or sitting on important committees.

And all that is good but the disconnect is how this is helping the people who live on Main Street who believe our representatives are the only ones benefiting.

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I am a realist. It is sheer folly for anyone to think the men and women we send to Washington would not seek to improve their lives or position and burnish their reputations among their peers.

I know I would — and I have no doubt that people reading this column also would seek to enrich themselves in any way that was legal.

I expect the people we elect to do well because, in my way of thinking, if they are doing well, so are we.

But that does not seem to be happening.

“Politicians have one goal only and that is to be reelected,” wrote a reader from North Haven. “What a system where people become millionaires through public service.” No wonder they won’t leave Washington. Term limits please!”

And I agree.

It doesn’t make any sense at all to keep sending the same people back to Washington again and again if experience is bringing the same result that newbies would bring.

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Public service is not intended to make politicians wealthy while the rest of us suffer.

But that is exactly what is happening — and I guess that is why I spent the last two weeks reading and listening to readers complain.

We don't understand why things are not getting better for us.

Terms? There should be a limit on time in office.