The Limits of Corruption

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Another corrupt, term-limits-hating, careerist politician bites the dust.

“Federal prosecutors say Republican Speaker Larry Householder and four others — including a former state GOP chairman — perpetrated a $60 million federal bribery scheme,” reports the Dayton Daily News, “connected to a taxpayer-funded bailout of Ohio’s two nuclear power plants.”

Last year, a citizen-initiated referendum campaign sought to give voters the final say on the legislature’s $1.5 billion baby. “The relentless machinations of HB 6’s backers,” Cleveland Plain-Dealer columnist Thomas Suddess points out, “kept [that] repeal effort launched against the bill off Ohio’s ballot.”

Mr. Suddess is correct that “[t]he legislature also won’t be OK till voters amend the Ohio Constitution to make it easier to place issues on the statewide ballot for up-or-down votes.”

But when he goes on to argue that term limits are “part of that problem”?

The only thing Ohio’s term limits need is to make the limits lifetime — forbidding legislators from returning after a timeout. Householder had previously been speaker from 2001 to 2004. “While he officially left office due to term limits,” informs the Plain-Dealer, “he departed Columbus amid an FBI investigation that closed without charges.”

Householder also came to our attention back in March, when he called Ohio’s eight-year limits “pretty oppressive.” Before the pandemic, he was pushing a ballot measure designed to weaken the term limits law and serve until 2036 — foreshadowing what Putin* did later in Russia.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

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At a news conference to explain the arrest of Householder and his co-conspirators on racketeering charges, federal prosecutors detailed some of the ways the scheme illegally blocked last year’s referendum effort.

Now, the rush is on to repeal House Bill 6.

* I referred to them as “two pols in a pod,” but now, Householder reminds me more of former Arkansas State Sen. Jon Woods, who after sponsoring a deceptive ballot measure to weaken term limits was convicted on multiple felony charges and is serving his current term in prison.