

The Fix Wasn't In

September 26, 2022

Something totally unexpected — by me, at least — happened earlier this month in North Dakota. It concerned a citizen initiative to term-limit the Peace Garden State's governor and state legislators.

Not unexpected, however, how often term limits measures meet resistance from long-serving politicians, judges, and officials.

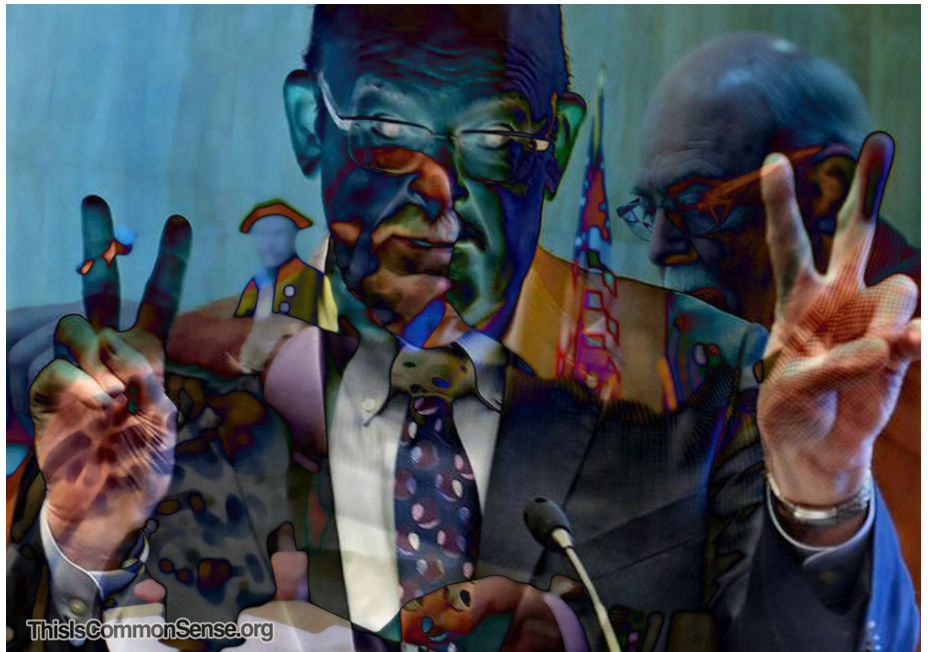
Al Jaeger has been the Secretary of State in North Dakota for the last 30 years. This is Mr. Jaeger's final term; at age 79, he's not seeking re-election.

Back in February, Jared Hendrix and the North Dakota Term Limits committee submitted over 46,000 voter

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signatures on petitions to Jaeger's office, enough to far surpass the 31,164 requirement to earn a spot on this November's ballot.

Yet, in March, Secretary Jaeger ruled that the petition fell far short of the requirement, throwing out over 15,000 otherwise valid signatures because the petitions were notarized by someone he "suspected" of fraud. Before making this public announcement,



however, Jaeger had brought proponent Hendrix into his office and, along with the state's attorney general, threatened criminal prosecutions unless he withdrew the petition.

Hendrix refused to cave. And with help from U.S. Term Limits, the North Dakota group challenged the secretary's denial. Still, when a lower court judge agreed that Jaeger, with all his experience, could make such sweeping judgments to disqualify petitions, I feared the fix was in.

But earlier this month, the surprise: the North Dakota Supreme Court ruled, unanimously, that Jaeger had misapplied the law and ordered the amendment placed on the ballot as Measure 1.

Yes. Misapplied. Deliberately?

Thankfully, the term limits amendment includes a provision to prevent itself, if passed, from being overturned except by another citizen initiative.

We know how eager establishment politicians are to kill term limits by hook or by crook, mostly crook.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.