



# The Mad-Libs Incumbency

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In late April, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's delegate to the U.S. House for these last 35 years, "stumbled through a short speech in which she appeared to struggle with both reading and comprehension, unable to deliver more than a garbled, Mad Libs-style version of her intended remarks," according to a [report](#) in *Washingtonian* magazine and confirmed by an [audio](#) recording.

Annie Karni's [story](#) last week in the *The New York Times* discloses concerns among Norton's "colleagues and friends" of "a notable decline ... that has quieted her voice, leaving her vastly diminished and struggling to fulfill her congressional duties."

Karni's other tidbits?

- "In hearings, she often sits quiet and alone, sometimes relying

on staff aides to remind her where she is."

- "She sometimes does not seem to recognize people she has known for years."
- "Ms. Norton is unable to function independently."

That means she is unable to function as an effective representative of the people of Washington, D.C.

"In Ms. Norton's case, the signs have been evident for years," explains *The Times* article. Her activity on the House floor has dwindled precipitously."

Still, when questioned earlier this week about possible retirement, Norton declared, "I'm going to run. I don't know why anybody would even ask me."

The 88-year-old non-voting delegate from our nation's capital would be 90 if reelected next year and able to complete a 14th term. When of course she might yet run *again*.

"Ms. Norton's story is a familiar one in Congress," acknowledges *The Times* reporter, "an institution littered with towering figures who have stayed around well past the prime of their lives."

Yet this is not really about age. It's about incumbency. Politicians leveraging their positions for unlimited rule ... resulting in rule by the old, the doddering, the feeble.

We all know — 'cept for incumbent politicians — that the answer is term limits.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.