



Terminal Representation

July 20, 2026

Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, 84, has been absent from Congress, [hospitalized](#) for weeks — first with no comment on his medical condition, still with very little information divulged.

There should be an ethic in public service that when one is incapacitated, one hands the trust given back to the public to fill anew.* Sadly, this tradition has fallen victim to . . . take your pick: incumbency, partisanship, lack of electoral competition, Cicero's times/mores.

History's [third-oldest](#) U.S. Congress "boasts" 23 members of the House and Senate now eighty years old or older. Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, the senior Iowa Senator, is the oldest at 92.

This aging of our decision makers has set up a seniority

system of sorts. Hardly healthy.

No wonder polls [show](#) overwhelming public support for age limits.

Though I, too, would vote for, say, an 80-year age limit, if given the chance . . . age is not really the problem. I know people in their eighties who could well serve in Congress.

For a time.

The better [answer](#) is good old-fashioned term limits, which garner even greater public support.

Mitch McConnell entered the U.S. Senate at age 42. He then spent the next 42 years in Washington, the longest serving senator in Kentucky history.

The six older U.S. Senators — Durbin (IL), Grassley (IA), King (ME), McConnell (KY), Risch (ID), Sanders (VT) — average 33 years in Congress, while the 17 octogenarian House members average 28 years. Only Rep. Jim Baird of Indiana has been there less than a decade, first elected at age 73.

"We don't think senility is really the problem," says [U.S. Term Limits](#) CEO Nick Tomboulides. "We think incumbency is the problem, and senility is the symptom."

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* Part of the politics with Sen. McConnell is partisan: he is a Republican but the governor who would appoint his replacement for the rest of 2026 is a Democrat.