

Term limits might remove weak-minded politicians

■ OUR OPINION: Strom Thurmond should not be a candidate or a senator

While President Clinton and other presidential candidates are busy initiating campaign strategies for this coming November, some incompetent politicians are completely unaware that the election should merit any concern.

Surprisingly enough, one of these politicians already has been elected to the Senate and has been there since the 1950s. He is 93-year-old Strom Thurmond.

According to his staff members, the senator, who heads the Armed Services Committee, still recounts the most minute details of his 68 years in politics. According to these members, he is always on top of his duties and never fails to read from a prepared text. What his staff members fail to mention is that during these meetings when discussion veers from his prepared text, Thurmond will become disoriented and start reading the stage directions scribbled in the margins.

But this is not the only action that has made the senator's incompetence undeniably obvious. In April, Thurmond shoved a USAir flight attendant when the attendant refused to allow him to store his coat in the first-class coat closet (he was flying coach).

At a recent rotary meeting, the senator rose to introduce fellow senator Phil Gramm and drew a blank.

After being pushed by a vagrant in a subway station last year, Thurmond walked on, completely oblivious that the senator he was traveling with was wrestling the

man to the ground.

The Thurmond situation is absurd not only because a confused 93-year-old senator is considered competent enough to run for re-election, but because a senator who holds the senate record for the longest filibuster — 24 hours and 18 minutes against a 1957 civil rights bill — still represents the image of the New South.

It is difficult to understand why South Carolina voters would choose Thurmond over his millionaire Democratic opponent just because he is the GOP candidate.

As Washington pampers and protects this senator, ensuring that he has a personal driver for the remainder of his days in politics, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole proves to be one of Thurmond's biggest protectors. Washington is becoming this man's personal nursing home because many voters are afraid that if Thurmond is not re-elected, he'll die.

Although this is a democracy, and anyone older than 30 can run for Senate, politicians who were elected when Herbert Hoover was President should not still be on the campaign trail. Situations such as these should make it evident that term limits are desperately needed in areas of government other than the presidency.

If we wish to make any political progress and implement long overdue reforms, we cannot allow our country to be led by conservative leaders of past generations, especially not by those who know less about their own political standing than their staff assistants and aides.



Hall passes needed for sex with profs?

If you're sleeping with one of your professors, there's a meeting today you might want to attend. If you're a University faculty member and you're sleeping with a student, you definitely should make this meeting.

The University Senate will consider a new policy at 3 p.m. in Room 110 Fenton that regulates sexual relationships between faculty and students. The proposal declares that sex between students and faculty "involves unethical conflicts of interest and abuses of power."

The new policy states that all sex between faculty and students will be viewed as non-consensual. "Such relationships greatly increase the chances that the faculty member ... will abuse, or appear to abuse, his or her power by sexually exploiting the other party to the relationship. The power differential in the professional relationship makes a student's or subordinate employee's consent to the sexual relationship inherently suspect."

That makes perfect sense — at a middle school.

But within the University context it assumes that all students are so young and naive that they're not able to consent to sex. It implies that faculty are so powerful that they can coerce students into sex. It tells faculty members that they are so lecherous and so driven by sex that they're unable to function professionally.

"But it's not fair to the other students," said law school professor Caroline Forell, who helped draft the policy. "If one student is having sex with the professor, it affects how the other students feel in class. It changes things for that class. It makes people feel uncomfortable."

Well, I agree the University needs to protect me from feeling uncomfortable.

Martin Fisher, president of the student senate, points out that if the University was really concerned about protecting students from the abuse of power, it would be considering a companion revision to the student conduct code, one that would sanction students for engaging in sex with professors.

"That's nothing that the University plans to regulate at this point," Forell said. She added, though, that the policy addresses conflict of interest. "The students are being graded compared to each other," she said. "They believe that they will not be graded objectively because of this other person."

Fisher said he's inclined to believe that people are capable of making their own choices, and that students who make dumb choices have to live with them. "Should a student receive unfair treatment, though, it's likely that they won't sue the professor — they'll sue the University," Fisher said. "I think this is entirely a move to protect the University in the event of a

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lawsuit."

However, Forell denies this. "The University has resisted this policy till now because the faculty may sue for defamation, saying, 'You know what? I have the money to take the University on and get the press attention, and it will make me look like a martyr.' Professors are much more dangerous to the University than students in terms of lawsuits."

The rationale is to "provide clear direction about the professional risks and serious harms which are associated with sexual relationships in which a power differential exists between the parties involved. The University is committed to fostering the development of learning and working environments characterized by professional and ethical behavior."

As if faculty weren't aware of the professional risks. The conflict with that is that the policy gives lip service to the University's commitment to professional and ethical behavior while acknowledging that the faculty are unprofessional and unethical. You can't have this thing both ways.

I think there's a danger of abuse here — a third party can complain that a student and a professor are intimate and that grades are affected. What if a student goes forward with a complaint that his ex-girlfriend is now sleeping with her history professor? Whether it's true or not, several people would then have a monumental mess to deal with.

This policy is insulting not only to non-lecherous faculty, but also to women students in general. We're not talking about a bunch of fifth-grade girls here; we're talking about adult women. The University is telling us we can't consent to sex with a professor? 'Scuse me, but I think I can decide that.

If I was sleeping with a Hunka Hunka Burnin' Faculty, and if I felt that an abuse of power was occurring, I'd know where to go to complain. People who felt "uncomfortable" about it would know where to go to complain, too.

There are laws against sexual harassment, and the University has adequate policy to deal with lechers. If this is not so — if the ranks are crowded with lechers and lovers of Lolitas, then the University needs to take a cold hard look at its hiring and tenure policies.

If the University really needs to protect naive students from predator professors, I'm enrolled at the wrong place.

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