

Headlee's latest: Officials' sunset

Taxpayers United Federation has begun a petition campaign to place constitutional limits on the number of terms Michigan's elected officials can serve.

The drive was announced at a recent news conference by Richard H. Headlee and Allan C. Schmid. Headlee is the Farmington Hills insurance executive who led the 1978 campaign to impose constitutional limitation on property taxation in Michigan. He is president of the Taxpayers United Federation. Schmid is executive vice president of the federation.

Headlee said a committee called Taxpayers United for Term Limited will conduct the drive for petition signatures to get the proposed new constitutional amendment on the November ballot. The committee seeks 400,000 signatures of registered voters to force a referendum on term limitation.

- The amendment proposed by the organization would:
- Limit state representatives to not more than three two-year terms, a total of six years.
 - Limit state senators to two, four-year terms, a total of eight years.
 - Limit the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and secretary of state to a single, six-year term.
 - Prohibit any state-elected official from receiving any state-paid job for two years after completion of his term of office.
 - Eliminate state-paid pensions for elected state officials.

The term limitation proposal — 'a sunset law for politicians.'

— Taxpayers United

Headlee said the proposed amendment is designed to "lead the careers of the professional politicians whose main ambition is their own re-election and return state government to citizen legislators."

He said a "Citizen legislator is a person who does something else for a living besides serving in state government, whose livelihood is not dependent upon his re-election."

"Citizen legislators do not have a vested interest in doing what is politically expedient," Headlee said. "They know they are going to have to live with the laws they help write after they've left office and have returned to their home communities."

Schmid called the term limitation proposal "a sunset law for politicians." He said studies by the Taxpayers United Federation indicated that the higher the pay received by professional legislators, the more bills they introduce, the more money they spend, and the less time they spend in their home districts. They just plain get out of touch with the people."

Blood ties

Biologist studies link between measles and MS

Could measles somehow be connected with multiple sclerosis?

A University of Michigan-Dearborn faculty member is seeking an answer to this question. Her research is aimed at understanding the cause, and perhaps providing a clinical treatment method, for the prevention of MS.

Linda E. Fisher, assistant professor of biology at U of M-Dearborn, is one of 100 scientists in 35 universities working under research grants from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS).

"RESEARCHERS have found that, for some reason, people with MS have a higher rate of measles in their blood," says Fisher. "Normally when a person is infected with measles, the disease runs its course and that's it. However, one particular infection caused by measles lingers and then recurs several months, or even years, after the original exposure," notes the U of M-D professor.

"This is called Subacute Sclerosing Panencephalitis (SSPE). It is a chronic, slowly progressing disease of the central nervous system which is ultimately fatal. Because SSPE and MS are both chronic diseases of the central nervous system, research is now being done to determine if MS is triggered by measles," she adds.

According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, MS is a chronic, often disabling disease which affects the brain and spinal cord. It usually strikes adults between the ages of 20 and 40.

An estimated 500,000 Americans suffer from MS and related diseases, making it the most prevalent neurological disorder among that age group.

myelin sheathing, or "insulation," around the nerves in the brain and spinal cord usually disintegrate, causing the vital signals to and from the brain to fail.

"People who have MS also have measles antibodies in their cerebral spinal fluid," says Fisher. "This is very unusual and can indicate one of two things: that there is a measles virus in the central nervous system or that measles antibodies made elsewhere in the body are being transported into the cerebral spinal fluid."

"In an individual without measles infection, the amount of antibodies is fairly low since they only appear when a foreign protein, such as measles, has to be neutralized."

Prof. Fisher's research looks at the MS-measles question in an indirect way. Her research is studying cells in which the measles' virus doesn't go away.

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