



Dear Iowans,

Three years ago, when I was elected to Congress and arrived in Washington after living my entire life in Iowa, it didn't take long to see firsthand how D.C. can change people. That year, lobbyists and the corporations that back them spent more than \$3.5 billion to influence the federal government, much of that aimed at members of Congress.¹ That adds up to countless cocktail hours, receptions, banquets, and closed-door meetings – and doesn't even include the tens of millions in campaign contributions showered on our Representatives and Senators. Spend too much time in Washington, and all those perks can make some politicians forget about the people who sent them there and the values they were elected to serve.

Iowans need look no further for proof than the record of our own Senator, Chuck Grassley.

When Sen. Grassley was first running for Congress in 1974, he declared to Iowans that “our first priority is to get the wealthy to pay the fair share.”² He ran on a platform of breaking up corporate monopolies.³ And he pledged that he wouldn't go Washington, promising that he would continue to live in Iowa rather than residing in D.C.⁴ After earning election, he told voters “If I don't come back to Iowa the same Chuck Grassley that left, well, you ought to kick me in the seat of the pants.”⁵

Nearly 50 years later, the Chuck Grassley of 1974 would hardly recognize his current self as he's broken every single one of those promises. He's backed tax giveaways for the richest Americans and largest corporations⁶ that added nearly \$2 trillion to the national debt,⁷ then turned around and voted against a \$1,600 tax cut for Iowa families, deeming it too expensive.⁸ He's rolled back protections on Wall Street designed to break up big banks, in order to let financial companies make more money at the expense of Iowa workers and small businesses.⁹ He now lives in a D.C. home worth nearly a million dollars, and is personally worth millions that he's invested with Wall Street.

And back here in Iowa, we've paid the price. We're paying more for our prescription drugs as prices are jacked up year after year.¹⁰ Our small towns and rural areas are being hollowed out due to lack of investment and opportunity.¹¹ And since Sen. Grassley went to Washington we've lost 30,000 family farms as D.C. has put large corporate agriculture first, and left family farms an afterthought.¹²

Why has Sen. Grassley changed, even though he once promised he wouldn't? One has to look no further than the corporate special interests and lobbyists who now back him.

Sen. Grassley's received more than \$1.2 million in campaign contributions from lobbyists,¹³ who routinely host D.C. fundraisers for him.¹⁴ A longtime member of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Grassley was the guest of honor at a fundraiser hosted by Wall Street bank J.P. Morgan Chase,¹⁵ then shortly after voted to stop the Dodd-Frank financial reforms that reined in J.P. Morgan Chase and the rest of Wall Street.¹⁶ He's received more than \$1.3 million from the pharmaceutical industry,¹⁷ and helped write the law banning Medicare from negotiating with the drug companies for cheaper prescription drugs for seniors.¹⁸ And he's firmly embedded in the D.C. revolving door – at least 29 of his current or former staffers have worked as lobbyists, more than all but eight other members of Congress.¹⁹ Many, having built close relationships with Sen. Grassley, now likely turn around and lobby him on behalf of their corporate clients.

It's clear that over the decades D.C. has changed Chuck Grassley, and that he now stands up for his lobbyist and corporate industry donors rather than the Iowans he represents.

But he's not alone. By the end of the current Congress, 18 Senators will have spent two decades or more in the Senate. That amounts to decades of opportunity for corporate lobbyists to wine and dine and cozy up

to our elected officials to shift their priorities from fighting for working citizens to boosting the profits of their companies.

We must break the iron grip of corporate influence on our legislative process, and that starts with imposing term limits that ban members of Congress from serving more than 12 years in office. Instituting Congressional term limits is a common sense solution that is backed by more than 80 percent of Americans, including strong majorities of both Republicans and Democrats alike,²⁰ and will play a key role in cleaning up Washington.

Even Chuck Grassley once agreed. Sen. Grassley has been voting for 12-year term limits for at least 30 years,²¹ and called them an “effort to return democracy to the people.”²² He even once recognized their effectiveness in preventing lobbyists from taking over our government, declaring of a proposal to impose term limits on Congressional committee service, “in this way, no one Senator can become a dictator on any one issue and it prevents the lobbyists and career bureaucracy from becoming too all-powerful.”²³

However, as the decades roll by, Sen. Grassley seems to only truly support them for everyone else but himself. In 1996, he voted in support of a Constitutional amendment that would impose 12-year term limits²⁴ – but then voted to exempt his own 24 years of service in the Senate so he wouldn’t be forced to step down if the effort was successful.²⁵ And in recent years, he’s expressed hesitancy about his earlier support for term limits, even attempting to reverse his previous conviction that term limits reduce lobbyist influence, and instead arguing that they “strengthen the power of lobbyists” and that “we kind of have term limits anyway because every six years or two years you get a chance to vote out a member of Congress.”²⁶

Enough is enough. I got into politics to fight for Iowa communities just like the small town I grew up in; to stand up to big corporations and put people first by lowering prescription drug costs, raising wages, investing in our rural areas, and breaking up monopolies to prevent Iowans from being taken advantage of – even if it means the biggest multinational companies have to make a bit less in profit.

I didn’t run for office so I could have a career in Washington spent cozying up to lobbyists or to get rich off the taxpayers’ dime. Two terms in the Senate would be more than enough for me, and it should be more than enough for anyone else too.

That’s why I’m following through where Sen. Grassley has failed, and pledging to Iowans that if elected, I will serve no more than two terms in the Senate. And I’ll support 12-year term limits for each legislative body that will keep everyone else in Washington from serving longer than that period as well.

While many Senators have given lip service to this idea, very few have actually kept their word. Just last week, Sen. Ron Johnson broke his pledge to serve only two terms and announced his re-election campaign for a third.²⁷ So that’s why I’m making a commitment to every single Iowan – if I break my word and run for a third term in the Senate, I’m asking each and every one of you to vote me out at that time. Anyone who goes back on such a promise deserves to lose their job.

One hundred people should not hold a near-monopoly on Senate service, and I know that there are tens of thousands of inspiring individuals in communities across the country who can get much more done, and do it by actually putting partisan politicians aside and focusing on actual solutions. Term limits will make it much harder for corporate lobbyists to hijack legislation to boost their profits, get new blood into the Senate that will be laser-focused on the ideals and ideas on which they ran for office, and spur Congress to start investing in our communities and our families once more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abby Finkenauer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Abby Finkenauer

CITATIONS

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4. [“Grassley to seek 3rd District seat.” Waterloo Courier, 2/7/74](#)
5. [“UNI graduate goes to Congress.” Greene Recorder, 1/22/75](#)
6. [H.R. 1, Vote #323, 12/20/2017](#)
7. [“GOP tax law will add \\$1.9 trillion to debt: CBO.” The Hill, 4/9/18](#)
8. [H.R. 1319, Vote #110, 3/6/21](#)
9. [S. 900, Vote #354, 11/4/1999; S. 2155, Vote #54, 3/14/2018](#)
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12. [1974 Census of Agriculture – Iowa, U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau, p. I-13; 2017 Census of Agriculture – Iowa, U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau, p. 7](#)
13. [Top Industries – Career, Chuck Grassley, Open Secrets](#)
14. [Breakfast for Chuck Grassley, 3/27/12, Sunlight Foundation; Breakfast for Chuck Grassley, 9/30/10, Sunlight Foundation](#)
15. [Breakfast for Chuck Grassley, 3/10/10, Sunlight Foundation](#)
16. [H.R. 4173, Vote #208, 7/15/10](#)
17. [Pharmaceutical Manufacturing: Money to Congress, Open Secrets; Pharmaceuticals/Health Products: Money to Congress, Open Secrets](#)
18. [Co-Sponsors, S. 1, 108th Congress](#)
19. [Revolving Door: Congressional Staffers, Open Secrets](#)
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22. [“High court tosses out term limits.” Quad City Times, 5/23/95](#)
23. [“Grassley projects air of maverick.” Quad City Times, 10/27/92](#)
24. [Cloture motion on the committee substitute S.J.Res.21, Vote #79, 04/23/1996](#)
25. [Markup of S.J. Res 21, Senate Judiciary Committee, 2/9/95](#)
26. [“After almost 40 years in Senate, Grassley still backs term limits.” Cedar Rapids Gazette, 6/19/19](#)
27. [“Ron Johnson says he will run for third Senate term despite previous pledge to retire.” Washington Post, 1/9/22](#)