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Council shouldn't decide term limits: Queens Civic

By Howard Koplowitz

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The Queens Civic Congress' general membership said it wants voters, not the City Council, to decide whether term limits should be overturned during its monthly meeting Monday at the Queens County Farm Museum in Floral Park.

"If City Hall and the City Council seek to repeal or modify term limits, anything other than a voter referendum smacks of illegitimacy," the organization's executive committee said in a motion for the general membership to address.

The debate over term limits heated up after reports surfaced that Mayor Michael Bloomberg was considering overturning term limits with a City Council vote.

Bloomberg and the majority of City Council members, including 12 of the 14 Council members from Queens, will be forced out of office next year because they are nearing the ends of their second four-year terms.

There was little discussion of the term limits issue when the organization voted to take the position that any change should come from voters.

Bob Friedrich, the president of Glen Oaks Village and a City Council candidate, said if term limits were extended, they should not benefit those who are already at the end of their terms.

Queens Civic Congress President Corey Bearak said the organization was not forming a position on the substance of term limits — whether they should be extended or not. He said the group was only deciding whether it believed the City Council or voters should make the decision to do away with or keep term limits.

"We're not speaking to the substance of the issue," Bearak said.

City Councilman David Weprin (D-Hollis), a comptroller candidate who is in his second term, agreed with the Queens Civic Congress' view that voters should decide the issue and has introduced a bill to that effect.

"The voters have made their statement via the ballot box, not once but twice, and any change should continue to come via the ballot box," he said in a statement.

Weprin was referring to voters passing referendums in 1993 and 1996 limiting elected officials in New York City to no more than two consecutive four-year terms.

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