

The Un-American Way by Dan Jacoby

March 4, 1801 was one of the greatest days in American history.

After serving four years, President John Adams had been defeated in his attempt at reelection – defeated by Thomas Jefferson, Adams' political enemy. The campaign was probably the most vicious, brutal and disgusting this country has ever seen. By contrast, Karl Rove's worst tactics still render him a pantywaist. Certainly, Adams had no desire to turn the keys to the Executive Mansion over to someone as venomous and hateful (to Adams) as Jefferson.

But on March 4, 1801, as Adams' term of office ended, he left town. Adams gave way to the still fairly new "American way" of doing things.

Today, Michael Bloomberg faces the end of his two-term limit, just over a year away. But instead of following the shining example of John Adams, Mayor Bloomberg has decided to change the law so that he can run again.

The term limits law was enacted because the people of New York City voted to enact it fifteen years ago in a referendum. Three years later, the City Council tried to overturn part of the law through another referendum, but the voters chose to keep the system they had enacted in place.

Now, Mayor Bloomberg not only wants to change the law to satisfy his own personal desires for power, but also wants to circumvent the will of the people and push the new law through the City Council. This reprehensible action has no moral justification; if the voters enacted the law, only the voters should be allowed to change the law.

More reprehensibly, the City Council may just accede to Mayor Bloomberg's sordid power grab.

In the 220 years since the founding of our country, there have been many examples where people in power failed to live up to the ideals on which America was created. President Adams himself provided one glaring example, when he signed the Alien and Sedition Acts. His behavior alone demonstrates that even leaders have both greatness and vileness in them.

Mayor Bloomberg's great moments are well documented. He steered the city through some of its darkest hours. He took office when the embers from the World Trade Center were still smoldering, the budget was facing a potential \$6 billion deficit, and people were scared. In taking over, he steadied the government, and gave New Yorkers hope that we could get through the hard parts – and the city thrived again.

But this episode is vile and un-American. Mayor Bloomberg's legacy should be of a mayor who saw New York City through the tough times and brought the good times back; it should not be of a man who became so enamored of himself that he believed nobody else could do the job. Those are the legacies of dictators and tyrants.

And any City Council member who votes to support this un-American act should be equally held in permanent contempt.