

# **The Government's Aging Issue**

Yasin M. Mohamed

Anoka Ramsey Community College

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Chris McCarthy

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The future is often something we imagine as a more developed and improved version of what our world currently is. It's what we expect the world to become after the new leading generations have had the torch passed down to them and are allowed to pave the way for innovations and advancements. Sometimes though, expectations don't always match up with reality and this can be seen best in our government. Much of our government consists of the elderly upper class that still carries beliefs and ideals from a previous period. They hold a large majority of the power to decide what path our country is headed down and they chose to lead it down the path that prioritizes them and their own interests rather than that of the nation.

For many powerful government positions, there are several requirements to be eligible to hold a seat, one of these being that you must be of or above a certain age. This minimum age can vary between 25-35 depending on the state and/or position, but it is still a constant across many levels of the government. While this minimum age requirement makes plenty of sense, there is still no maximum age limit for serving in the government despite there being plenty of strong reasons for one's existence. I believe there should be an upper limit on how old someone can be to hold a powerful position in parts of our government such as the Senate, Supreme Court, and even the Presidency.

As a result of a lack of upper age limits for entering and running for or holding many government positions, a large number of elected officials fall into higher age ranges. This results in a disproportionate age representation for the US population as an older minority of the population holds far more representation than any rest. For many powerful government positions, there are several requirements to be eligible to hold it, one of these being that you must be of a certain age or higher to run for it. This minimum age can vary between 25-35 depending on the state and/or position. This is put in place primarily by the US Constitution so that any officials that get elected will be at an age where they can showcase through their achievements and endeavors that they are capable and responsible enough to fulfill the duties that come with holding such a highly impactful and powerful position in the government. When learning of this and understanding the logic behind it, it would be reasonable to assume that a similar condition exists at the opposite end of the playing field for folks who are higher in age. However, this is not the case at all.

Currently, there is no upper limit or even restriction for the age of someone who is either running for or is currently holding positions such as Supreme Court Justice, Member of the House of Representatives, or even the President of the United States of America. As a result, many of the officials that hold these positions, particularly ones that have no limit on how long they can be held, have begun to slowly become filled with far older people who aren't as in touch with many of the various new interests and beliefs of newer generations within the United States. Many have continued to hold positions for decades and as a result prevent newer blood from entering into these positions, effectively drowning out the voices of younger generations by limiting how many new officials who share their interests can enter into the system.

Many people holding a lot of the power to decide the future of the US come from an age demographic that is far smaller in the larger population of the country. This means that the voices of younger citizens from as young as 18 to as old as 45 have less representation when it comes to how the nation feels about certain bills and laws. According to *America's Health Rankings*, about 17.3% of the United States population are citizens that are over the age of 65 years old. Despite this though, you can see that throughout various parts of our government, a large part of the people who fill the various high positions are all more elderly. When looking at places such as the Senate, House of Representatives, Supreme Court, and most recently even the President you can find many in their mid to late 60s and 70s, with some even occasionally hitting the 80s. For example, when you look at the Supreme Court and examine all of the Justices you find that 44% (4 out 9 Justices) are over the age of 65, an already drastic difference from the 17.3% that this demographic holds nationally. Furthermore, The Senate, which consists of exactly 100 members, has 51 members who are over 65 years old and 34 who are over 70. For comparison, 14 of the 100 members fall on and beneath the age of 50 with only 2 falling below 40 years old.

Secondly despite what some may believe, the experience that comes with older age does not always directly translate into making better long-term decisions for the betterment of the country. It is natural to conclude that as people get older, they go through more experiences in their lives that help and affect their approach to things in life. For example, an important part of making decisions on passing laws and bills that will impact the entire nation is having expertise on various issues, processes, and events throughout Congress and the government. However, another vital part is understanding the interests and needs of all the citizens of the United States that you are making large decisions on behalf of. This means that it is crucial that those in power equally consider what all age, sex, and race groups want from their elected officials. But when a large portion of different parts of our government are made up of people who are far older than most of the populace, we encounter an issue where the interests of the government mismatch with what the people the government is representing want. Most commonly, newer generations directly experience the effects of many decisions made by the Supreme Court and Congress while older generations that have already established their livelihoods are less impacted. Adding an age cap for these positions would allow for more age diversity among our elected officials and would offer younger politicians who represent a large, scarcely represented part of our society and have a lot to bring to the table for leading the nation.

Lastly, many healthcare sources state that more noticeable declines in cognitive performance begin to appear around 70 years old in 2 out of 3 elderly adults, which as I have shown previously is a very common age for members within many parts of Congress. While many conditions and symptoms that naturally come with aging have slowly been made inconsequential through modern medicine and technological advancement, aging has still been proven to have significant effects on the mind's capabilities when a person reaches and surpasses the age of 70. When looking back at the more present ages within Congress, for example, we find that several members surpass the age where cognition begins to slow down more noticeably. The best example we can actually see of this is none other than our current active President Joe Biden, who has reached 81 years old. As more time has passed and Joe Biden has been in office for longer, we have been subjected to viewing several cases where he struggled to maintain a degree of sense when giving longer speeches or being tasked with even following a path and avoiding straying from it. One of his more severe cases of noticeable decline in mental faculties is an incident where he was given a notecard simply summarizing his topic objectives for a meeting. He would later flip this notecard around while talking to look at some notes he had written on the back, resulting in people and cameras catching a glimpse of the very simple instructions he had to be given. While most cases of severe cognitive decline are far harder to come by than those of our President, they are likely still present as more tame cases and can be impacting the leaders of our Nation due to the oversight of there being a lack of a limit for the age of congress members and justices.

In short, much of the power in the United States government is held by mostly an older age group that doesn't even come close to representing younger generations. They don't share the same goals and beliefs in where the nation's future should be heading and are in some cases even struggling to maintain the agency to complete their responsibilities. Despite all of these apparent strong reasons to create a limit though, there will likely not be one for quite a few generations for very self-explanatory reasons when you look at the structure of our government. Many of the people who hold the power to decide whether an age cap should exist would directly be losing power as a result of it, giving them an incentive to oppose the motion. But just because we may not get this as soon as we would like to doesn't mean we don't have to stop pushing for it. As more time passes, more opportunities to push closer to being heard clearly will open up. Eventually, though the future we dream of will be reached, it just may take us a bit longer to get to it than we originally thought.

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