Congressional candidates for the majority-black 4th District fielded questions on term limits, health care, job creation and other issues as they appeared before a panel at Southern University Tuesday night.

Five of the eight candidates appeared at the forum sponsored by the university's Young Democrats. The two Republican candidates in the race were not invited.

Most of the candidates said they favor limiting terms of congressmen and senators, except candidates Faye Williams of Alexandria and Sen. Cleo Fields of Baton Rouge.

“I oppose” term limitations, said Williams. It’s strange, she said, that every time women or African-Americans began to move ahead the rules are changed.

With officials having to come before the voters at election time, “We already have a mechanism to get rid of people who don’t serve us well,” she said.

Setting term limits is popular, said Fields. But, he said, as a state senator he can serve only four years before he has to go before voters for re-election. And, as a congressman, “you can limit my term after two years.”

Shreveport councilman Joe Shyne said term limits are a part of his platform. If a candidate can’t accomplish his program in 12 years (six congressional terms), “there’s something wrong with your ability.”

Sen. Charles Jones of Monroe said although he supports term limits, “people are the best” in limiting the terms of officials.

Attorney Jim Rosso of Monroe said he supports limiting terms, for “we need to cultivate new leadership.”

On another issue — how to specifically solve the nation’s health care problems — here’s some of what the candidates had to say:

• Sen. Fields — The United States needs to turn to a national health care program, specifically looking at the Canadian program, Fields said.
We, first, need cost containment (and) make sure we have a national system where government regulates insurance costs to make sure that every person who breathes can afford insurance.

Secondly, we need a partnership between business and government where employees can have an affordable health care plan so when they take sick they can have the kind of health care they need.

Councilman Shyne - The health care problem is a serious problem that will be facing the nation in the future. "What the answer is, no one really knows at this particular time."

Also, he said government needs to get "off the backs of the medical care providers. There is so much red tape." Shyne said the lawyers, doctors, health care providers and insurance companies need to get together "to come up with a program that is feasible."

Sen. Jones - The first bill that Jones said he passed when he came to the Legislature was to prohibit hospitals from denying access because of a patient's inability to pay.

Jones said he favors "subsidizing health care" and favors "a national health policy subsidized by the federal government."

And, if elected, he would vote to subsidize health care and to reduce governmental red tape.

Attorney Ross - The candidate said he favors universal health care, not national health care. In a national health care plan — more than 60 plans have been introduced in the Congress — "the national government (will) payroll the health care plan, similar to the one in Canada."

The other is for every employer to pay a percentage of his income directly for his employee to pay their insurance premium."

But the national health care plan is tied directly to holding a job, and if not working, "you do not fit in the mold. That's why we need universal health care to assure everyone is covered."

The federal government also needs to put a clamp on insurance rates, he said.

Attorney Williams - Among major nations, only the United States lacks universal health, she said. "We should have universal health care and it should be affordable to everyone and it should also be accessible to everyone. We regulate everything in this country, including what women do with their bodies. Why can't we regulate the cost of health care...?"