

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Biliau Diwygio | Reform Bill Committee

Bil Senedd Cymru (Rhestrau Ymgeiswyr Etholiadol) | Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill

Ymateb gan John Sweeney | Evidence from John Sweeney

What are your views on the general principles of the Bill and the need for legislation to deliver the Welsh Government's stated policy objective (to make the Senedd a more effective legislature by ensuring it is broadly representative of the gender make-up of the population)?

I am not at all sure that the proposed change would make the Senedd a more effective legislature. I can find no evidence to support that aim. Unless the evidence is there then I believe the appearance of coercion in the proposed measure is likely to lead to resentment and bitter local disputes and legal wrangles. There is also a danger that the measure might undermine women in the Senedd by leaving them open to the charge that they did not get there on merit.

What are your views on the system of enforcement and potential sanctions for non-compliance proposed in the Bill?

The self-identifying aspect neatly shows the type of legal and administrative quagmire which awaits this legislation. Added to this, the idea of a new quango having the power to re-order a party's list or, even worse, take over the ordering of it, will cause great resentment. It produces another layer of bureaucracy between the people and the democratic process which is supposed to be easy to access. Yet more people will regard politics as something isolated from everyday life and something practised by "other people".

Are there any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions? If so, what are they, and are they adequately taken into account in the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment?

I see no legal or other barriers.

Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

As mentioned earlier, I believe this Bill will alienate people even more from the democratic and political process and will do so in pursuit of an unproven improvement in effectiveness.

What are your views on the Welsh Government's assessment of the financial and other impacts of the Bill?

I have no comments on these aspects.

What are your views on the balance between the information contained on the face of the Bill and what is left to subordinate legislation? Are the powers for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation appropriate?

In general I am on favour of broad wording on the face of Bills with practical implementation resting mainly with subordinate legislation. In this case I welcome it in the hope that it will be easier to pause implementation as the downsides become apparent.

Do you have any views on matters relating to the legislative competence of the Senedd including compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights?

No

Do you have any views on matters related to the quality of the legislation, or to the constitutional or other implications of the Bill?

No

Are there any other issues that you would like to raise about the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum or any related matters?

No

Anything else?

No