

SCECLB234 Individual

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 Unigolyn | Evidence from Individual

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)?

Firstly in my view the expansion of the senedd should not go ahead without any form of public referendum. Not only that I don't particularly like the fact that the closed list system will effectively remove any hope of independent candidates standing in a senedd election, or for us to actually select who our representatives are. I'm also alarmed at the lack of any form of mechanism for recall elections or by elections.

With regards to the gender quota issue, I think ultimately whichever way you spin this there will be instances where the best people for the job may be mostly men, or mostly women and ultimately this setup will result in some sub standard candidates being selected.

Obviously diversity is important and naturally a quota would help ensure balance, however on the figures stated you've rightly said that there are more women in Wales, which could lead to women being excluded. The other element which I would definitely look into is the gender split within politics- and I'm not talking about ms'- what's the split of everyone involved, and if so is the 50/50 intention going to not line up with the reality of the pool of people who actually run.

In my view, I think that whilst old school, we should have the best representatives for us, and if that means 100% of the candidates are women, great, likewise if it means there's a 50/50 split then that's fantastic, but by artificially imposing restrictions, we're restricting talent.

Another element to consider is what about transgender people? If they were to run would they have to declare their "legal" gender, which may not be how they live their day to day life? or would this be done on a case by case basis, and if so would the final decision be down to the electoral commission, the party or someone else? What if the candidates is non binary- would they count to their birth gender or their chosen

gender or would they not count at all or would they be excluded? This issue in itself would likely cause outrage depending on which way it's called and probably bring more heat to a community that given the current state of affairs needs another opportunity to be attacked- and if this scheme does go ahead, before ratification would the trans community be consulted, and for balance the gender critical community?

Whilst at the start I've made my options to the overall Senedd expansion clear, but in my view all this does is restrict choice in a setup that is already going to restrict choice, and probably isn't in the best interests of the people of Wales, or indeed any future Senedd and Welsh government as by forcing equality, there is a risk of accidental discrimination and having a lower quality of MS's when I think most people don't care about what gender their representatives are, and are more interested in the quality they bring to their constituents

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

Firstly why is the question "are you a woman or not" rather than "what gender are you", does this assume that everyone who is not a woman is a man- if so are we excluding transgender people from being our representatives? Or are we saying we have to have 50% women and the rest could be made up of 30% men and 20% non binary individuals, which would defeat the point of the gender quota split, or would we change the setup so that a certain amount of representatives are transgender, and because that number is very low, does that mean that they are over or under represented- as mentioned prior I think this bill could inadvertently open up attacks to the trans community which is very concerning.

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?

The CRO would have enormous power

The issue surrounding transgender candidates

Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

Because of the "non women" question, does this mean that transgender candidates are excluded or could men be underrepresented?

Gender zipping- does this only apply to party's or will this be rolled out meaning each constituency has 3 women and 3 "non women", or could we be in a situation where 6 party's win votes and all the representatives from a constituency are men?

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

When we have a near £1bn deficit in the country's finances should we really be looking at adding 36 more senedd members who will collect earn over £70k each, plus the costs to expand the chamber, replace ty hywel or fully refurbish it, to me it seems a bit silly

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?

Realistically the bill needs ALOT of work and many clarification...

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

See my previous comments regarding the question being are you a woman or not? And the implications of that for men and transgender people

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

See above

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

I think most of my concerns regarding this aspect of legislation, and the senedd expansion in general are clear throughout.

Anything else?

If you are going to press ahead with senedd expansion or implementing closed lists I really think it would be wise to hold a referendum to allow the people of wales to actually have a say on this rather than a small focus group, people who fill in these forms, or the Cardiff Bay Political class. I'd probably guess Dai from Aberdare or Sian from Wrexham doesn't even know this is happening.