

SCECLB401 Andrew Cowan

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 Andrew Cowan | Evidence from Andrew Cowan

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)?

Closed Lists are wholly undemocratic as they by nature remove any accountability for individual members. I'd quote the great Tony Benn "To whom are you accountable? And how do we get rid of you?". Closed lists preclude this fundamental democratic right.

We live in a thriving meritocracy so although it is laudable to have an Assembly based on demographic proportions we require the accountable members to be capable of undertaking their duties, not appointed to a position simply to "tick a box".

The lack of recognition of 'sex' rather than "gender" simply undermines the basis of the compilation of the "closed list" in fact in any case.

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

The definition of a 'woman' as an adult human female is fundamental to this requirement. That definition MUST be included to avoid self declared 'women' from bypassing the requirement to appropriate scrutiny. Failure to include this will erode the basis of the proportionality the Act seeks to enforce.

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?

Lack of direct accountability of elected candidates.

Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

A higher proportion of male representation without appropriate scrutiny of what a woman actually is.

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

Unnecessary expense incurred to implement a biased and unaccountable provision.

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?

No, such fundamental constitutional changes require public referendum.

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

Not in this context

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

Lack of oversight from the voting public. The prevailing government have unrestricted powers to implement this and other fundamental constitutional legislation without scrutiny or accountability. I reiterate, accountability to the electorate is a basic function of democracy and this Bill proposes to remove that basic right.

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

Anything else?

Listen to the public and take heed. The Senedd is the representation of the people, not a self serving entity to do as it sees fit simply because 'it can'.