

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 Debra Cooper | Evidence from Debra Cooper

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)?

51% of the population are female, so at least 50% of the elected representatives should be female.

All other protected characteristics should be represented in fair and equal measure to the %of the population that the group represents.

In the case of disabled people and people with diverse religious beliefs and black and ethnic groups, then all views should be represented, which may mean that as well as candidates, merit and attention should be given to advisors in government who have lived experience of differing disabilities and beliefs. To clarify this, if for instance no deaf people are elected then there should be opportunities for deaf people to influence policy and easily access all political information. Possibly with more paid roles.

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

I believe that the word female should be used, not woman.

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 believe that there should be balance in government. Childcare provision and flexible working are obvious barriers to females of a certain age. These requirements should be provided for, as they are real life practical barriers to a fairer government. Also provision for prayer areas for people and a timetable that reflects

times when some ministers may not be available. People will not stand if they do not have the ability to carry out parenting tasks and be a member of government.

Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

It is possible that the females and BAME people will be chosen to stand in seats where their parties do not normally win. This may not lead to balanced representation.

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

In principle we should be governed by individuals who share our views. PR is not adequately addressed by this system, and it highly favours Conservatives, Labour and Plaid Cymru to the detriment of the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats. It also rules out the options of Independents standing. I do not think that the list system is fair. People want to vote for people, not just parties.

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?

I have only just received this survey, and the accompanying documents. This is what should have been brought to the attention of women in the Senedd WEN sessions. There could have been ample opportunity to debate and reflect on these documents with other women. I am shocked that this is the first sight that I have had of these documents, and this survey has given inadequate time to digest quite detailed documents. This is not an adequate consultation methodology.

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

Again, I would require more time to digest what this means, and its impact on females. If I were to do this survey justice, I would sit down with a group of females and examine exactly what my thoughts are and understand more clearly what your intentions are. At present I am doing this survey on my phone.

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

I would like you to send all of these links to me with the questions, and set up group debates, so that we can move forward and properly consider this.

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

Send me all relevant documents and give me time to digest them. Set up groups for debate and feedback.

Anything else?

Far too much information given at the time of the survey. I cannot adequately address each document in this format.

Supplementary information provided by email

Thank you for sending the documents. They are interesting to skim through, although the time allocated to read them in depth and digest them by the deadline was inadequate.

In summary I will say that openness with the electorate is key. The electorate deserve respect, especially when trust is at an all time low in politicians. I would urge you to put yourself in the electorate's position. Transparency is key. Manipulation of the system so that it is seen by some as fair may be seen by others as coercive control. People do need to see and hear from the candidate they are voting for and then make a balanced judgement. Keeping lists opaque causes suspicion and is therefore a grave error of judgement.

I am fully in favour of 50% of the Senedd being female. Statistically I believe that less 49% are men. That leaves 1%. I believe that 0.2% of the population are medically transitioned people. 22% of the population is disabled (male or female) in Wales. The biggest neglected group in politics is people in their twenties.

It is important to supply the means for disabled people, women and black and of diverse beliefs and religion to be elected in fair and equal measure from the population of Wales.

Given the Climate crisis it is also important to seek political representation from people from the age of 25 and upwards. Not enough thought has been given to recruiting politicians in their twenties. With the CASS Review it is apparent that young people have been unfairly treated. Perhaps this is because they are seldom heard as Senedd Members. Your priority needs to focus on recruiting young members.

Best wishes

Debra