

STATES OF JERSEY



COMPOSITION OF THE STATES: SPRING ELECTION AND MOVE TO 4 YEAR TERM OF OFFICE (P.118/2010) – AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 23rd September 2010
by Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

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PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (c) –

For the words “should be reduced from 12 to 8” substitute the words “should be reduced from 12 to 6”;

For the words “4 Senators” where they appear in sub-paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) substitute the words “3 Senators”;

For the words “53 to 51” in sub-paragraph (i) substitute the words “53 to 50” and for the words “51 to 49” in sub-paragraph (ii) substitute the words “50 to 47”;

For the words “8 Senators” in sub-paragraph (iv) substitute the words “6 Senators”.

DEPUTY T.M. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Having stated at the 2008 Senatorial Hustings that, if elected I would still support both a reduction in numbers for Senators and a move to standardise a 4 year term for all States Members, it is not surprising that I roundly applaud the proposition being brought by the Privileges and Procedures Committee (PPC). Indeed, having already tried in 2009 to reduce our number by 6 down to 47 (as an amendment to debate on the potential for a single type of member Assembly), it will be equally unsurprising to Members that it is only in the size of the proposed reduction that I differ from PPC at all.

With the report from PPC laying out a good and solid argument for their proposals, in explaining my reasons for the increase from staggered cuts of 2 to reach a reduced total of 6 Senators over the elections of 2011 and 2014, to successive cuts of 3 to create a new total number of 6 Senatorial positions, I will further reiterate only the briefest of key points as I see necessary. It should also be noted that the helpful chart laying out how the cuts would work within PPC's report is still wholly relevant for reference, by simply substituting the numbers as laid out at the beginning of the amendment.

If we wish to retain our parish system then Senators are the only option for reductions

Whilst I, like many, believe that there is a very strong case for arguing that a single type member Assembly would be the most efficient and practical, the desire expressed by so many Islanders to retain the traditional parish system has thus far made such a reform unworkable. How many times has every one of us heard various constituents say that they want a reduction in total number – but that they also want to retain *their* Deputies, Connétable and an Island-wide mandate? All of this *and* that they must keep the traditional parish system retained as well!

Frustrating as all of this can be to anyone who would see him or herself as a 'reformer', I believe that what comes out of all of this, if one can be detached in analysing such demands alongside the reality of the statistics, is that the only positions within the current States Assembly that offer realistic scope for reduction is the role of Senator. After all, let us just briefly consider the positions of Connétable and Deputy. Both are far more intrinsically tied up within the tradition of the parish system.

Connétables

If we are to keep the parish system, then other than a move – already rejected – to an all-Deputy Assembly, the potential for a reduction in the number of Connétables is non-existent: government could not send out the message that, for example, 10 parishes could retain their father/mother of the parish but two can't. Frankly, any such suggestion would be absurd.

Deputies

Whilst there are some Members who would dearly love to see any reduction in the States Assembly come from within the ranks of the parish Deputies, unfortunately for them – as was made quite apparent within my report into the possibilities of an all-Deputy Assembly in 2009 – the statistics relating to the 'population to representative' ratios just don't support this. A number of parishes, including St. Brelade and

Grouville, are already under-represented in terms of the number of Deputies – with the most glaring example being the capital, St. Helier, under-represented by a full three.

The case for 12 Senators is no longer sustainable

As stated, the only position offering scope for reduction if retaining the parish system is that of Senator. For, whilst the argument is wholly sustainable that the Island-wide mandate is necessary and should remain, the argument that the Island needs 12 of them has been eroded under Ministerial government to the point of being untenable. The facts simply speak for themselves.

For many both within government and amongst the public there has long been a view that with an Island-wide mandate there was a traditional link between Senators and the holding of ‘senior’ government posts. Under the Ministerial system, however, and this current Council of Ministers in particular, any necessity for this has been wholly discredited. For, as PPC also highlights itself, out of 12 Senators only 5 occupy positions as Ministers; the other 5 Ministerial positions being occupied by 4 Deputies and one Connétable.

In a modern world, and with the constant demand to save monies wherever this can be achieved without detrimental consequences, having no direct link to the parish system, the need for 12 Senators simply does not any longer hold water. After all, whether the number of Senators was reduced to 10, 8, 6, or less, voters in all the Island’s parishes would still have the same number of potential representatives to vote for.

Cost-effective government and a huge saving to taxpayers

If we are serious about reducing costs in government, then it is quite clear that such an outcome must be brought about by a considered reduction in numbers. Of course, there are a minority who, due to a smug self-interest, desire to take democracy back to the days when only the wealthy could afford to stand for election, by pushing to reduce salaries instead. But if we are to attract people not only with skills and expertise gathered from all walks of life, and to make a 60 – 70 hour week attractive enough in the first place, these siren voices of elitist idiocy must be disregarded.

Crucially, a cut over 2 elections totalling 6 Members not only saves the Island in the region of £270,000 with an Assembly of 47, it also protects the so-called ‘Troy Rule’ should the proposition on the ‘machinery of government’ from Senator A. Breckon not be adopted and the present Ministerial system of Executive and Scrutiny remain in place. This ensures an outcome of cost-effective government for the future and a £270,000 saving to taxpayers.

Financial and manpower implications

Fully concurring with the perspective of PPC that proposals for reform should not be based on financial implications alone, the reality of this amendment being adopted remains that, as of 2011 there would be a total saving to taxpayers of approximately £135,000. This would be doubled as of the 2014 elections, resulting in a final total saving of approximately £270,000. There are no manpower implications.