

STATES OF JERSEY



COMPOSITION AND ELECTION OF THE STATES ASSEMBLY: REFORM – PROPOSAL 1 (P.93/2013) – THIRD AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 26th November 2013
by Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence

STATES GREFFE

COMPOSITION AND ELECTION OF THE STATES ASSEMBLY: REFORM –
PROPOSAL 1 (P.93/2013) – THIRD AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

Delete paragraph (a) and substitute the following –

“(a) that the Assembly should be comprised of 51 members, comprising 8 Senators, 12 Connétables and 31 Deputies;”.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

Delete paragraph (b) and renumber the following paragraphs accordingly.

3 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (d) –

Delete the Table in paragraph (d) and substitute the following Table –

“DEPUTIES’ CONSTITUENCIES

<i>Constituencies</i>	<i>Number of Deputies to be returned</i>
Saint Helier –	
Cantons de Haut et de Bas de la Vingtaine de la Ville	3
Cantons de Bas et de Haut de la Vingtaine du Mont-au-Prêtre	3
Vingtaines du Rouge Bouillon, du Mont-à-l’Abbé et du Mont Cochon	5
Saint Saviour –	
Vingtaine de la Petite Longueville	2
Vingtaine de Sous l’Eglise	2
Vingtaine de Maufant, de Sous la Hougue, des Pigneaux et de la Grande Longueville	1
Saint Brelade –	
Vingtaine de Noirmont et du Coin	1
Vingtaines des Quennevais et de la Moye	2
Saint Clement	3
Saint Lawrence	2
Grouville	1
Saint Martin	1

<i>Constituencies</i>	<i>Number of Deputies to be returned</i>
Trinity	1
Saint John	1
Saint Mary	1
Saint Peter	1
Saint Ouen	1

4 PAGE 3, PARAGRAPH (f) –

Delete paragraph (f) and substitute the following –

“(f) that in an Assembly of 51 members, the maximum number of Ministers and Assistant Ministers shall be 23”.

5 PAGE 3, NEW PARAGRAPH (g) –

For the number “44” substitute the number “51”

DEPUTY J.A.N. LE FONDRÉ OF ST. LAWRENCE

REPORT

To say that I relish introducing a further iteration of electoral reform into the present series of debates would be an exaggeration of the highest order. To be blunt, I believe that the Public has had enough of the varying debates and I share their view.

That fatigue is (I believe) partially one of the reasons that the level of dissatisfaction with the States is increasing, coupled with a view that we should be focussing on far more important matters. Additionally, as I have previously referred to in past debates, the independent evidence from the MORI polls performed by a former PPC clearly demonstrated that super-constituencies were one of the least popular choices for electoral reform.

One outcome of the last set of debates was a decision to ask the Public their view on the implementation of Clothier, and accordingly their view will be sought at the next election.

It therefore seems contradictory to be having yet another separate debate which has the potential to significantly change matters even before that issue has been resolved.

However, it is also clear that statistically there are certain Parishes which are under-represented with regard to their population.

On that basis, I am proposing that we should not make any significant changes for the 2014 elections, and instead am proposing a minor change to partially address the under-representation that does exist within the present make-up of the Assembly.

In essence, this amendment freezes the number of States members for the 2014 elections at the present level – i.e. 51.

Ordinarily that would mean retaining 10 Senators; however, I accept this may cause some issues during the course of the elections given the number of potential candidates. Therefore, I am suggesting that the Senators should reduce to the presently agreed number for 2014, namely 8, with the difference of 2 seats being allocated as Deputies – one additional seat to St. Helier (No. 3), and one to St. Clement.

The advantages of this in my view are that it does not restrict the ability of any future PPC, once the dust has been allowed to settle, to consider options for reform.

A move to super-constituencies will be completely contradictory to the recommendations of the Clothier report (which is the question to be put to the Public), and would also mean that any alternative proposals to remain with a parish-based system (accompanied by the Island Mandate) would be much harder to implement.

At the same time however, I do seek to partially address some of the issues of under-representation. Whilst proportionality does improve under this proposal, I make no pretence that it is an all-encompassing solution.

With respect to the 2014 elections, it means that no Parish LOSES any representative. So it will safeguard the position of electors in St. Mary, St. John and Trinity, to name but three.

The obvious disadvantage is that it only represents a reduction of 2 States members from the 53 when I first came to the Assembly. That does need to be put in the context of a much larger population (since 53 was first agreed upon some 60+ years ago), and what appears to be an ever-increasing workload.

At the time of making this amendment, there are 2 far more significant pieces of work that are being undertaken. Firstly, following the work of the Sub-Panel into the Machinery of Government, recommendations are being developed by a Working Group, including the Chief Minister.

Secondly, work is starting to occur around the reform of the civil service.

Both of these matters are (in my view) far more critical than the debate surrounding the number of States members in the Assembly, and there is a strong argument that only once those issues have been properly resolved and bedded down (with proper oversight as well as inclusion) that we should then look at the number and composition of States Members in the Assembly.

As I stated in the last set of debates, in my view we keep jumping to a solution without having established what parameters are acceptable to both the Assembly, and more importantly, to the Public. For example, it is all very well asking whether the Public want less States members or not. It is a bit like asking whether they want to pay more tax – the answer is very predictable.

But MORI was very clear – the Public want to retain the Island-wide Mandate. Super-constituencies were one of the least popular options. It seems clear that the Public DO wish to see Constables retained. However, do they accept (or not) that smaller parishes should have a minimum representation of one Deputy? If they do, then the focus becomes more on which parishes are under-represented (and to what extent), as opposed to trying to achieve equal representation. There is a subtle distinction between the two. Therefore, in my view we should be establishing such parameters first, before jumping to a numeric solution.

If members wish to see some form of reduction in States members from the present 51, but to retain a parish-based system, then the answer is to reject all of P.93/2013 and associated amendments, which will result in a continued move towards the 49 previously agreed, with 8 Senators.

If members wish to freeze matters to where we are at present, a parish-based system, with a minor tweak on representational issues, which will grant greater flexibility to any future PPC wishing to return to this matter, then I hope members will consider supporting this amendment.

Financial and manpower implications

Relative to the present Assembly of 51 members there are no financial or manpower implications arising from this amendment.

Relative to the presently agreed move to 49 members there will be no reduction in the costs of the Assembly of approximately £92,000 per annum.

However, it has been made very clear in the past (including by the present PPC) that the issue surrounding any reduction in States members should be because it is the right thing to do, not because it might make a financial saving.