

STATES OF JERSEY



CHIEF MINISTER AND MINISTERS FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND TREASURY AND RESOURCES: ISLAND WIDE MANDATE

Lodged au Greffe on 1st April 2014
by the Deputy of Grouville

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to agree that candidates for the offices of Chief Minister, Minister for External Relations and Minister for Treasury and Resources should be required to hold the office of Senator, having therefore been elected with an Island-wide mandate;
- (b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward for approval the necessary amendments to legislation to give effect to the proposals with effect from the appointment of Ministers after the 2014 elections.

DEPUTY OF GROUVILLE

REPORT

As many will know I am a strong supporter of the Island-wide mandate. I brought 2 propositions to the States in 2011 to try to stop the erosion of the Senatorial seats from 12 to 8. My first proposition was defeated in March 2011 in the last Assembly by 23 votes to 25 and the result for the second one was even closer having been lost on 7th July 2011 by 25 votes to 26 with one abstention.

Notwithstanding the Assembly's decision, I believe the public value the Office of Senator as was indicated in the last Mori poll and certainly the members of the public I speak to have indicated as such. It was unfortunate indeed that they were not given the opportunity to express their opinion on the Island-wide mandate in last year's Referendum. It was one of the shortcomings of the Referendum proposals in my view, that 5/6th of the Island would be denied the opportunity to vote for a candidate who could become the future Chief Minister.

The office of Senator gives the Island as a whole the opportunity to express their opinion about candidates and we in turn, should place a greater value on the Island wide mandate by differentiating the role and its abilities. By demanding that a candidate for a certain high-office job can only come from the Senatorial benches, goes someway to creating that value.

I also believe that it would give greater focus to the electorate when voting on and considering the calibre of candidates in the Senatorial elections.

The 3 Offices which I believe yield sufficient power to demand an all Island mandate are the follows –

- Chief Minister – the Island's political leader, chair of the Council of Ministers and could in the future be the Island's civic head, should come with an Island-wide endorsement. I say this especially in light of P.33/2014, Amendment No. 8 to the States of Jersey Law. This proposition yields significant powers over this Assembly and it is only right that the person responsible should have been put into Office by the Island as a whole (rather than a small Constituency for example).
- Minister for Treasury and Resources – it is often said that the person in charge of the purse strings is the person who yields most power and therefore should be recognised as such in an Island-wide capacity. The post holder requires intellect and huge amounts of commitment and the public should be given the opportunity to vote on the calibre of person they would like to see in that position.
- Minister for External Relations – for similar reasons that were advanced in elevating the position and powers of the post from that of an assistant minister to minister. When carrying out duties abroad on behalf of the Island as a whole, I believe Islanders in turn should be given the opportunity to choose who that post-holder should be. The post holder acts as an Ambassador to Jersey abroad and through the London office and again, should come with Island-wide endorsement.

I have restricted the posts to that of 3 at this stage, as we are restricted from a choice of 8 Senators. But I believe these are the 3 most important and influential posts in the States Assembly and their mandates should reflect as much.

Personally, I would prefer there to be a greater number of Senators so we could extend the amount of Ministers who require an Island-wide mandate. For example, that of Minister for Planning and Environment should perhaps come from an Island-wide mandate instead of representing a small geographical area of the Island which could lead to conflict on planning applications. The Minister for Health and Social Services who is responsible for the biggest spending budget, and it is arguable their position that they should come from the Island-wide mandate.

The other side to this issue, which I am not going to dwell on as it is not the real point I am making, is that Ministers spend most of their time in their departments, especially those Ministries I have cited, which is as it should be. It is easy to see therefore, how a Connétable or Deputy could become distracted from full-time commitment to their Ministry with Community and Constituency issues.

Financial and manpower implications

Other than the work associated with amending legislation I do not anticipate any financial or manpower obligations from this proposition.