

**Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2015 –  
Third Reading approved**

**The Speaker:** I, therefore, call on the Hon. Member, Mr Shimmin, to move the Third Reading.

**Mr Shimmin:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I apologise. I had a two-page speech to try to justify the reasons for this.

Having made an agreement with the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran, to suspend last week's movement of this in order for his amendments to allow... I am disappointed he would not have allowed us to do this as it is not for Council of Ministers, it is really for the benefit of the people. But I would like to thank the majority of the House for suspending Standing Orders.

The Bill does provide an important step towards improving transparency in governance of the Island's election framework and it will hopefully ensure that key reforms are in place before the next General Election.

The Bill incorporates recommendations of an independent panel, reform further to the post-2011 Election review and amendments arising from the public consultation and Tynwald Members' presentation.

It has deliberately had a light-touch approach, taken with regard to the main reforms contained in the Bill, such as those in relation to campaign funding and the registration of political parties as a first step in regulating these aspects of the election process. By their very nature, therefore, these provisions will need to be reviewed and updated accordingly and, as such, the Bill provides that details and further provisions can be made by secondary legislation which will be subject to Tynwald approval.

Should this Bill be read for a third time in the House today and complete its passage in LegCo during the coming weeks, the election regulations will be finalised with an aim to be approved by Tynwald in October.

The provisions included in this Bill will, of course, have no relevance to the forthcoming by-elections. The Bill contains minor consequential amendments to local election legislation made in consultation with the Department of Infrastructure. When the new election regulations are brought into force these will apply to local elections but aspects can be modified or excluded by the Department of Infrastructure as it sees fit.

The 2016 General Election is fast approaching. We have the opportunity to ensure a fairer, more robust legislative base is in place in advance of that Election, with my appreciation and gratitude, not just to the House but also to my officers who have been responsible for taking this forward. They are in the Chamber at the moment and I will put on record my thanks to them for taking me, at a late stage, through this legislation and I beg to move.

**A Member:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Watterson:** I beg to second, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Mr Quirk.

**Mr Quirk:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will just be brief as well. I think the mover of the Bill here today is... time will tell... it will be a good service to the people who we try to represent.

I must say to the Minister... to support the officers for being helpful, because when I rang the office up and asked queries, they have certainly responded to those, both in writing, to myself. At the end of the day, some of the officers who do put the work in for the Ministers miss out, but I am glad that the two of them are here today and there must be others as well.

**Mr Watterson:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I just want to put on record really that if the Minister could have – and should have, in my opinion – sent a personal e-mail to all of us, stating that he was hopeful that we would support in taking Third Reading today as well as clauses, he may well have got a better reception than he did by having two Members of the House present voting against.

It is unusual and it is a practice whereby we have to suspend Standing Orders to take a Bill through further stages than it would normally and ordinarily be expected, so I think it is a bit... The Minister said he was a bit – I cannot remember his precise words but he was a bit concerned or upset that – (**A Member:** Disappointed) or disappointed that the Member, Mr Karran, had not supported his suspension of Standing Orders to take a Third Reading, in view of the fact that he had given him time to put his amendments together.

Do not forget, Minister, there is more than just one Member in this House; there are 24 Members when we have full complement. We have not got full complement today so, in fact, asking the House for 16 votes in the fact that we are short of quite a few Members now... If you want reassurance in the future then, please, make a personal approach to us and make your case to us for suspension of Standing Orders. Do not just expect it to happen.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I call on the mover to reply, Mr Shimmin.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder –

**The Speaker:** Mr Karran –

**Mr Karran:** Obviously, on reading the Third Reading of this Bill...

**The Speaker:** Sorry. You wish to speak, sir?

**Mr Karran:** Yes, I do.

**The Speaker:** Right. You had not caught my eye.

Mr Karran. I had not called you.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, obviously we are not going to vote against the Third Reading of this piece of legislation, but I do believe there are good reasons as far as why you have Standing Orders and you have reflections as far as that is concerned. I just would like to make it quite clear I was quite happy that... Unfortunately, the amendments came in late for the last sitting but I was quite happy to try to suspend Standing Orders in order to address the issues that I wanted to raise, because I do not think it would have made any difference whether I had... Well, it has made no difference whether I suspended Standing Orders last week to try to have the amendments moved at the clauses stage or not, as far as the way the partisan system that we have within this Hon. House now, with the Council of Ministers' Government party.

But I do feel that there are reasonable arguments as far as why you would want to suspend Standing Orders today as far as this Bill is concerned; but I just feel that it is a missed opportunity. The whole idea of having the break-up of the procedures of doing these things is because it will let people reflect and be able to say what they want to say after thinking about what has been said at

the different stages of the Bill. At the end of the day, we are making the laws of the land. We are not here just to nod stuff through.

Vainstyr Loayreyder, I will be supporting the Third Reading of this Bill. It would have been nice to have been able to have given the leader of the Liberal Vannin Party to put any input as far as that at the next sitting of the House, but it is not something that we would want to die in a ditch... being the opposition... is concerned.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Thomas.

**Mr Thomas:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am delighted that this second amendment of the Representation of the People (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) is going through. Like the first one, it is making important changes. The first one brought us equality of representation and new constituencies; this one makes important advances in terms of parties and in terms of advanced voting and that sort of thing.

I hope the Minister, in his closing remarks, can confirm that a third Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill will be coming back in 2017 to modernise this democracy.

Today, we just got the disappointing news that the electoral register has fallen by 20%, so therefore we need to do everything we possibly can to actually make sure that democracy flourishes in this Island and that we encourage people to vote by using every legislative and political device we possibly can to make sure that people register and actually then vote, and politics is enlivened because of that.

**The Speaker:** I call on the mover to reply, Mr Shimmin.

**Mr Shimmin:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

On the last point first, by saying that it has fallen by 20%... it is being refreshed. People have had months to actually submit their names and therefore it has been cleansed of many people who have moved over the last 10 years, to either accommodation within the Island or indeed off the Island. Therefore, it is not helping democracy by having a 10-year out-of-date register. All individual members of the public have been encouraged to try to enrol and we will continue to do that.

With regard to the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran, we will agree to disagree. I believed that he would not get the suspension of Standing Orders to move his amendments last week and, indeed, I was indisposed at the time, so from my sick bed I endorsed the ability for us to have that extra week and, included in that communication to all Hon. Members, I did say that if this Bill got smooth passage through the clauses stage, I would potentially raise the Third Reading at that stage – which was notified to all Members.

I did not move it earlier because I was unaware of whether these amendments were going to be supported or not and, therefore, as the vast majority of clauses were unanimously supported and unopposed, I felt it was an opportunity to help to move at the speed that it was originally intended.

I apologise if there is any offence caused to any of the Hon. Members, but certainly I am grateful for your support to this stage.

I beg to move.

**The Speaker:** I put the question that the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill be read for the third time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Hon. Members, thank you very much. That concludes the business of the House today. The House will now stand adjourned until the next sitting, which will take place at 10.30 a.m. on 21st April in Tynwald Court.