

STATES OF JERSEY

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DRAFT AMENDMENT (No. 28) OF THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE STATES OF JERSEY

Lodged au Greffe on 11th January 2005
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE



Jersey

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REPORT

My primary intention in bringing this proposition is to assist the smooth and effective running of States business, but it will, I believe, also succeed in the secondary aim of assisting the Bailiff to conduct question time in an orderly manner.

I believe that question time performs a vital function in the overall business of the States. It will not be replaced by the scrutiny function but will remain as an essential adjunct to it. I remain convinced, as I was when I brought my amendment to P.171/2004 in October, that the experiment of reducing question time to an hour, was a step too far. It has not only reduced the time spent on questions but, far worse, it has significantly reduced the quality of the interaction.

I have only to refer to the proceedings of the 9th November 2004 to illustrate what I mean. There were 12 oral questions tabled, along with 12 answers to written questions. Many of the latter were fully answered in a brief paragraph. These might have been more appropriate as oral questions with consequent supplementaries, were it not for the artificial restrictions we have placed around question time. Once again, I was forced to farm out one of my three questions to another member.

In conducting the session that day, it seemed to me that the Bailiff struggled to find the balance between proper exploration of the issues through supplementaries, and moving matters on at an efficient pace. Once again, in my view, he found it difficult to find the correct balance, not through any fault of his own, but because the task we have set him is an impossible one. Twelve questions, and it often is twelve questions, simply cannot be answered properly in a mere hour.

We saw that day the introduction of a 90 second limit for Presidents' answers. The inevitable result was that two Presidents failed to get any sort of answer out at all, which in turn meant that the first supplementary was wasted in inviting the president to complete a competent answer. In addition to this unsatisfactory outcome, I counted three questions where members still had supplementaries unasked when time was called.

Members will recall my last attempt to lift the limit on the number of question permitted by any member was rejected, largely on the grounds that it meant no restriction at all. Here I give members the chance to consider raising that number from two to three. They may also recall the 21/21 tie on the possibility of 90 minutes for question time. In the absence of rejection, I am returning this decision also to the House for reconsideration.

There are no manpower or financial implications to this proposal.



Jersey

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Made

[date to be inserted]

Coming into force

[date to be inserted]

THE STATES, in pursuance of Article 27 of the States of Jersey Law 1966,^[1] have made the following amendments to the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey^[2] –

1 Standing Order 12A amended

In Standing Order 12A(3) for the word “two” there shall be substituted the word “three”.

2 Standing Order 14B amended

In Standing Order 14B(1) for the words “one hour” there shall be substituted the words “ninety minutes”.

3 Citation

This Amendment may be cited as Amendment (No. 28) of the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey.

[1] *Recueil des Lois, Volume 1966-1967, page 15.*

[2] *Nos. 4858, 5217, 5531, 5934, 6099, 6213, 6530, 6531, 6800, 7587, 7678, 8030, 8129, 8218, 8630, 8727, 8837, 8958, 9470, 9483, 54/2000, 115/2000, 116/2000, 112/2002, 121/2002, 35/2003, 155/2003, 51/2004 and 129/2004.*