

STATES OF JERSEY



COMPOSITION AND ELECTION OF THE STATES: SINGLE ELECTION DAY EACH YEAR

Lodged au Greffe on 30th June 2009
by Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that, notwithstanding any other reforms relating to the actual composition of the elected membership of the States that may be agreed by the States, all members of the States standing for election in any one year shall, with effect from 2011, be elected on one single election day in that year, with the exception of any casual vacancies arising that need to be filled through a by-election;
- (b) to charge the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward for approval the necessary legislation to give effect to the proposal.

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

REPORT

Members may be aware that there have been quite a number of debates over the composition of the States, with varying degrees of success in achieving change. A proposition has now been lodged by the Privileges and Procedures Committee (“PPC”) – P.72/2009 “Composition and election of the States: revised structure”. As explained in more detail below, the proposition that I am lodging with this report does not seek to change anything in P.72.

Since my time in the Assembly I have sat through at least 7 propositions and associated amendments. In the last 3½ years, almost none have been successful, in terms of being implemented. The Connétables did achieve a result in getting the elections for Connétable to be on the same day throughout the Island, and were initially successful in achieving a 4 year term of office, but this latter achievement was never implemented and was then overturned by a subsequent States decision.

I am therefore concerned that with P.72, despite all the hard work by PPC, we may end up without a result at the end of the debate.

To me it is very clear that the Public do want some form of change. The comment I most received on the door was to hold elections on the same day, rather than having this election period that has been created. Indeed, PPC notes that different election days are one of the factors that cause lower turnouts. This is very clearly demonstrated in the figures provided by PPC in P.72, whereby the 2008 turnout for Senators was 44.1%, for Connétables (contested seats) 50.5%, but for Deputies a number of weeks later, only 34.3%.

One of the platforms I stood on was supporting the principle of all elections occurring on the same day in any one year (obviously excluding by-elections).

This proposition seeks an evolutionary approach. As already stated, it does NOT impact upon P.72. If the latter is adopted by the States, then this proposition will not have any impact on the proposals, as it does not refer to numbers or categories of Members. If terms of office are changed by P.72, and a general election day is achieved, then this proposition will not impact upon that decision, as this will still be an election in any one year.

Therefore all this proposition seeks to do is to get the States to sign up to the principle of an election day in any one year, before we get into the minutiae of how many members, what term of office, or what electoral district will they represent. By phrasing it in this way, this does not change the numbers of States members, nor does it change any of the terms of office. There is no diminution in any of the categories of States member.

I would therefore hope that the majority of members can therefore at least sign up to this principle, and then we can debate P.72 separately. If P.72 is approved, then this proposition will not have any impact. If P.72 fails (and this proposition has been adopted in advance) then we will at least have taken another small step on the evolutionary path of electoral reform.

Financial and manpower implication

There are no financial or manpower implications arising from this proposition.