

# STATES OF JERSEY



## COMPOSITION OF THE STATES: REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF SENATORS – REFERENDUM (P.198/2010) – SECOND AMENDMENT

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Lodged au Greffe on 11th January 2011  
by Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier

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STATES GREFFE

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**1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –**

After the words “overall number of Senators” insert the words “or Deputies”.

**2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –**

For the word “question” substitute the word “questions” and insert a new question as follows –

“2. Do you wish the number of Deputies representing your Parish to be reduced?

YES  NO ”;

DEPUTY T.M. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER

## REPORT

Firstly, it really must be stated how strange I and many find it that a member of the Council of Ministers – a group of politicians so dismissive of acting on the wishes of the public over huge issues such as the implementation and increase of GST; unjust public sector pay freezes or the unfair and divisive 0/10 tax regime – should suddenly feel that a modest reduction of Senatorial seats that will be entirely uniform in its limited impact is somehow more important...

Be this as it may as I have already said in an amendment to the hugely flawed proposition on reducing the number of Deputies lodged by Deputy Noel, following on from the States finally reaching a sizable majority decision to adopt the reform package put forward by PPC in October 2010, I strongly felt that with this long overdue achievement and so many debates any further considerations of reform should be left until the election of a new Assembly later this year.

Unfortunately, however, the muddled and unworkable – many would say cynical - attempt by Deputy Noel, and subsequently Deputy Jeune, to undermine the representation of those living in the island's most densely populated parish, St. Helier, along with that of St. Saviour meant that as one of those elected to represent the interests of the Capital's people I have been compelled to try and ensure that some safeguard against such undermining of the democratic process is set in place.

As a consequence I believe that in the light of the referendum request lodged by Senator Cohen the most cost effective and, indeed, authoritative manner by which the people Deputies Noel and Jeune would happily strip of up to 40% of their representation can be made aware of, and either reject or support proposals that would shift the current imbalance of political representation even further toward the country parishes would be to simply add a second question as outlined above.

### **More than 150 years of tradition**

It is interesting that in his brief but somewhat rose-tinted report my good friend Senator Cohen tells us how some apparently wrongly believe the role of Senator to be a modern introduction. Only to then quite rightly outline how in fact the role of Senator actually came about as recently as 1948! This, of course, was the same time as the far older traditional role of Deputy – the first elected on January 12th 1857 – was expanded upon with final reluctant acceptance that the case for having individuals elected for life, and sitting in both legislature and judiciary as the Jurats did was wholly incompatible with any government wishing to claim it was a modern democracy.

This last point is highly important because it demonstrates the wholly inaccurate impression given that the role of Senator elected on an 'island-wide' vote grew out of some centuries old tradition of democratic purity. A great improvement the modern day invention of the Senator certainly was but the role and practice it grew from was anything but. As a consequence to try and make play of this great, historic tradition is as groundless as the currently trumpeted myth that there is any true need or constitutional justification for us keeping 12 Senators.

The case for resisting a cynical, further undermining of the urban parishes' Deputy representation, however, is – especially if we are to maintain the traditional parish

system which Deputies Noel and Jeune seek to destroy with their proposals is of far more importance. We simply cannot afford an island even more divided in terms of town and country; 'haves' and 'have nots'; powerful and powerless, then already exists now.

If we are to ask the public to decide on a small reduction in the number of Senators with no direct parish link before we as a government act, then I would suggest that we must certainly also take the opportunity to see if the people of St. Helier and St. Saviour or, indeed, any other parish are happy to go along with being conned out of their parish representatives. I think Deputies Noel and Jeune might be in for a rude awakening.

### **Financial and manpower implications**

As Senator Cohen states in his proposition that the only cost of running referenda is that of additional officer time, printing and associated costs, it would appear quite clear that as my amendment would simply tag on a second question to the material containing the question about Senators, there would be little or no financial or manpower implications rising from this.