

STATES OF JERSEY

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MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT REFORM: ELECTION OF SENATORS

**Lodged au Greffe on 9th November 2004
by Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that, following each general election to be held commencing 2008, a public election shall be held to elect senior members, to be known as Senators, from the elected Connétables and Deputies, on the basis that any elected member standing for election as a Senator –
 - (1) shall be nominated by 6 elected members;
 - (2) the total number of members proposed as Senators shall not be less than the total number of Ministers required;
 - (3) all registered electors shall be entitled to participate in the election for Senators;
 - (4) no member may stand as Chief Minister or Minister who has not been elected as a Senator;
- (b) to charge the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward the necessary legislative changes to give effect to this proposition.

DEPUTY S.C. FERGUSON OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

The prime requisites for a new system for the States are –

- Retain the elements of the system which work.
- Connect the government to the electorate.
- Cut the number of politicians in the States.

The suggestions underlying this proposition are simple –

1. Retain an Island-wide election; this second general election would be to elect members to stand as Senators on an Island-wide mandate as a prerequisite for selection for the executive.
2. Change the number of Senatorial seats to match approximately the number of seats needed for Ministers.
3. Members standing in the second general election should be chosen from the Deputies elected in the first election or the Connétables and would each be nominated by 6 members. They would be those who aspire to the position of Chief Minister or Minister.
4. Under the amendment to P.151/2004 proposed by the Deputy of St. Ouen, the total number of members of the States would immediately be reduced to 47 in November 2005.

In the first general election all those standing for Deputy would be able to campaign on their value to the local community. The same principle will apply to Connétables standing on a Parish basis. They might also mention if they aspire to go further. The small electorate will know their candidates and can decide on who they want to be their representative in the Assembly.

Those who aspire to high office and have been selected as possible candidates by the elected States Members would be able to come to the full electorate with a proper manifesto and can receive a proper mandate. The entire electorate would therefore be able to decide on the style and form of government which they would like.

Although it would mean a two-stage election, it would allow the electorate to use their vote to decide on each issue in turn. Both are important and should be considered on their own. It may mean that some saving is lost initially but a government is likely to remain far more focussed on its performance if it knows that it will be brought to account at the end of the term. There will, therefore, be greater accountability.

In addition, if all electors feel that their vote will count then this will provide more incentive for them to go to the polls. The recent elections in the United States of America achieved a turnout of over 60%. There is no reason to suppose that this level cannot be achieved in Jersey with this system.

This system, combined with the amendment of the Deputy of St. Ouen, would ensure that the Parish element and the Island-wide Mandate are both retained.

The consultation with the Parishes following publication of the Clothier Report underlined the public opposition to removing the Connétables from the States. This electoral procedure would ensure that the Connétables who feel that they wish to take part in the government will also be required to stand on an Island-wide mandate.

Electors will have the opportunity of directly participating in the selection of their government. However, those Deputies selected to stand for Senators will be selected by elected Deputies who will have knowledge of the capabilities of the elected members.

It is possible that this system may lead to the formalisation of the power blocs currently in the States. A group of like-minded members will probably stand en bloc with a joint policy and manifesto. This will give the electors a clear and unequivocal choice. This is not to say that independent members may not also stand. Indeed these

should be encouraged so that the Chief Minister would have a wider choice should some of his intended Ministers not be elected.

The system proposed by Clothier was such that it would have the effect of further isolating the executive from the electorate. This system is designed to involve the electorate and to enable them to have a democratic voice in their choice of government.

Financial and manpower implications

If adopted, the financial and manpower implications are the same as for conducting a general election.