

# STATES OF JERSEY

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## STATES MEMBERS' REMUNERATION FOR 2009 (P.24/2009): AMENDMENT

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Lodged au Greffe on 3rd March 2009  
by Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier

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STATES GREFFE

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After paragraph (b) insert a new paragraph (c) as follows-

“(c) to request the Chief Minister to include in the estimates of expenditure in the next Annual Business Plan a grant to the Association of Jersey Charities in a sum equivalent to the total saving that will be made following the reduction in remuneration in paragraph (a).”

DEPUTY P.V.F. LE CLAIRE OF ST. HELIER

## REPORT

In recognising the extra help that Jersey Charities need, at this difficult time, I wish to recommend to the States that we donate the savings that might be realised from this as a donation to the Association of Jersey Charities.

The various charities that might access these funds in the future will probably be benefiting the most vulnerable in our society. This will also include many Island pensioners, who are not finding life at all easy these days. With their savings being eaten up at an alarming rate, against the backdrop of low interest rates of returns on their savings and high levels of inflation, life for them is now very difficult.

I'm not suggesting that all pensioners are in need however, and some Charities in Jersey may be more in need than others. That is why I wish the money to be allocated by the Association, who know who needs it most and how it should be distributed fairly.

I accept that there are some pensioners who are comfortably and wealthily retired who do not need our help. By way of example there are some who are serving States members.

In fact there are a few States members who, it could be said, enjoy a very good quality of life, relatively speaking: especially those from amongst our number who can draw upon their past States Employee Final Salary Pension Scheme (PECRS). (Let's not forget, that States scheme was the one that was generously underwritten by taxpayers a year or so ago, for the next 85 years, with hundreds of millions of pounds of public money.)

These members will not miss another £1,000 of taxpayers' money; because aside from any private investments or properties they may have, they will in any event still enjoy the ability to receive this very generous pension, whilst at the same time being able to cash in on the money set aside for States members, which incidentally includes all of the Connétables, to allow us all to work on behalf of the public.

So, metaphorically speaking, after very shallowly digging into their pockets (and consciences) they will still be able to take the remaining money set aside for States members. Yes, that money which we all take (even the millionaires and the Connétables) voluntarily, month after month after month.

They will also, unlike many members of the public, be able to do so without having to face filling in a form, or being subjected to the requirement of submitting an income tax statement for the purposes of meeting the criteria that would qualify them under a means-tested system.

These States members in particular (no names mentioned), should for the most part be very willing to support this magnanimous proposition of the Connétable of St. Peter.

By way of background, I had asked questions of the Comité des Connétables recently, on what it was they each received from their Parishes to conduct States business, but the questions were not allowed by the Bailiff.

Had I been able to find out what the taxpayer was giving them, then I could have constructed a better argument to support the Connétable, but one does what one can!

No doubt this will all form part of a thorough review in the future, and it may even form part of the much anticipated appeal for different levels of pay for members in the future, when that comes too.

Who knows, maybe it will form part of their considerations, that as we are foregoing this money now, we can justify hopping on the Final Salary Pension Scheme, en bloc! Yes, arguably so, as we simply will not be getting paid enough to provide for our own affairs in the future and will otherwise, in time, become dependent upon the States for help.

### **Seriously, for a moment**

It must be said, aside from the tongue-in-cheek elements afforded me in writing this report, and the welcome opportunity to help the Jersey Charities in this way, I do seriously regret that the debate will be occurring at all in this fashion, once again on the floor of the House.

I thought that we had agreed a mechanism for States pay and review in a previous proposition, which was intended to avoid all of this unsavoury navel-gazing.

It would appear, however, that whoever did approve this proposition ignored that earlier decision as an unnecessary formality to agreeing this one.

Perhaps we should table a proposition to disband the States Members' Remuneration Review Body as well, which we elected to do this work?

Perhaps we should all get involved in the appraisal and setting of levels of remuneration for the unelected States

members in the future as well?

They are after all, free to comment upon our remuneration levels, and do so publicly.

Maybe we should, once again, get back to enduring more of these lengthy and unpalatable debates?

I would not wonder though, that they may well be seen to be, by the majority of the public, an appalling waste of our time, when we should be focussing on other, far, far graver matters at hand, like creating a healthy and sustainable economic future for Jersey.

It may be that we even decide to revert to means-testing for States members; after all, a dwindling economic base is the background, no doubt, to the reason why a variety of means-testing has been introduced for the public by the Council of Millionaires.

If the Connétable of St. Peter is really that keen to address these issues, then perhaps he will bring forward in the future a proposition that the Connétables receive less expenses in their remuneration than other members.

After all, they do enjoy a vastly superior advantage with our common electorate and our common constituents, with the assets and support staffing which are at their disposal.

Not to mention the Parish Newsletter which provides a very superior advantage from a public relations perspective at no cost to themselves.

I wonder when he intends to bring that proposition forward, and if it will form part of his submission to the current review being conducted by the States Members' Remuneration Review Body?

I, for one, shall be forwarding my views to them again, together with the transcripts of this debate at a later stage.

I shall also be asking them why it is that some members are allowed free telephone support and Blackberries, as part of their States support, whilst we are all supposed to receive the same remuneration.

Contrary to their stated belief in their current round of papers, I shall also be letting them know that in reality, contrary to their opinion, backbenchers face, at times, far more criticism from our media who are mostly "ON MESSAGE!" than Ministers themselves. Unlike them, we further do not enjoy local or non-local public relations teams working on our behalf, to the sum of £85,000 or more a year; coupled with a comprehensive team of communications staff and secretarial support systems and office facilities; coupled with officer support too!

The equal treatment provision under the States of Jersey Law 2005, that they mention in their paragraph on differential levels of pay (page 6, January 2009 consultation document, available at the Parish Hall) is a joke, and they themselves have failed to have regard for these issues by not even mentioning them in their consultation documents, which form the backdrop for the public to comment upon.

I suspect that they may have succumbed, unlike most of us, to the smooth and sublime arguments that are increasingly being made by disgruntled Ministers. Maybe through their communications departments and the locally and non-locally based PR firms.

You know, the local ones did get paid over £85,000 of taxpayers' money last year – that's £85,000 in a recession; and yet we are not allowed to know the names of who they were. Probably for fear of divulging their individual identities and their affairs, and possible political associations and affiliations, to the public.

Not a very democratic system is it?

That's Jersey for you!

### **Financial and manpower implications**

As the Connétable of St. Peter has set out in his proposition, the total amount that could be saved by the reduction proposed is approximately £39,000, nearly half that of the locally employed secret PR firms engaged last year by the Ministers.