

STATES OF JERSEY



STATES OF JERSEY LAW: QUORUM IN THE STATES (P.194/2009) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 4th January 2010
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The proposition asks the States to agree to increase the number of Members needed for a quorum to 35, and to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to amend the States of Jersey Law 2005 accordingly. The Committee has no view as to whether this figure, which represents two-thirds of all States Members, is the correct figure for the quorum, and has no objection, in principle, to an increase, although there are some practicalities to be considered.

Firstly, the Committee wishes to remind Members that they should be present in the States Chamber throughout each Sitting. There is a risk that, the higher the quorum, the more difficult it will be for the more conscientious members to take even the shortest break during the Sitting.

During 2009 the Chair was required to summon Members to return to the Chamber 25 times because the States were inquorate. On Wednesday 7th October 2009, when the States went inquorate 3 times in one day, the Bailiff drew Members' attention to their obligation to attend meetings of the States whenever called upon to do so, in accordance with their oath of office –

“The Bailiff:

Can I just say this from the Chair? I appreciate that this is a long Sitting and there are many matters to be considered and Members do occasionally have other things to do, but we have staggered through today, limping just above the quorate number for most of the day, and then, when the vote comes, almost everyone is here. I do remind Members of their obligation to participate fully in the debates.”

Should the States agree to increase the quorum, the Committee would wish to ensure that a small number of Members do not monopolise the capacity for absence. It would accordingly look at introducing a mechanism to ensure that members remain in the Chamber. It would also take into account the ability, or otherwise, of Members to use electronic devices in the Chamber following the outcome of Deputy T.M. Pitman's proposition, BlackBerries – costs for Ministers and Assistant Ministers and use in the Assembly (P.186/2009).