

STATES OF JERSEY



ELECTORAL REFORM (P.4/2007): COMMENT

**Presented to the States on 19th March 2007
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Privileges and Procedures Committee has considered the proposition of Deputy Southern as the matters contained within it fall within the Committee's terms of reference. The Committee's comments on the various parts of the proposition that remain are as follows (paragraph (a)(i) was withdrawn on 13th March 2007).

Paragraph (a)(ii)

The Committee considers that this proposal is premature as there is not yet any firm information about how the population register will work. The Committee also understands that the implication of Deputy Southern's proposition would be that any new arrival in Jersey would be entitled to vote as soon as he or she arrived in Jersey and, although this may form a reliable form of registration and address the difficulties in updating the current register, the Committee is nevertheless concerned that new arrivals would know very little about the political issues in the Island. Members will therefore need to consider very carefully the implications of any proposal to allow new arrivals to vote without any qualifying period of residence before supporting this proposal.

Paragraph (a)(iii)

PPC is shortly to bring forward proposals for the registration of political parties. The Committee agreed that this matter should be researched and that proposals should be brought forward for consultation at its meeting of 10th January 2007, just before Deputy Southern lodged this proposition. The Committee believes it would be more appropriate to await the full proposals being brought forward by the Committee, which will set out the advantages, disadvantages and any resource implications, before taking an "in principle" decision to establish a system of registration. The Committee does not believe it is appropriate for the Assembly to take decisions of this nature on the basis of a brief proposition from a private member when the Committee charged with this issue in its terms of reference is already bringing forward detailed proposals. The Committee therefore urges Deputy Southern to withdraw this part of his proposition and to await the consultation period and eventual decision on this matter later in 2007. If the States agree that registration of political parties is appropriate PPC undertakes to do all it can to bring forward the necessary legislation before the next major elections in 2008. A bid for law drafting time for this item has already been made by the Committee.

Paragraph (a)(iv)

The Committee's comments on this paragraph are similar to the comments above in relation to political parties. On 15th January 2007 the Committee presented to the States a comprehensive consultation paper regarding the proposed regulation of election expenses (R.2/2007). The Committee has sought views on that proposal and the 8 week consultation period ended on Friday 9th March 2007. The Committee will consider a draft proposition on this issue at its next meeting.

Once again the Committee does not believe it is appropriate to ask members to take a binding decision on this issue before a full debate, taking account of comments received during the consultation period, takes place later this year. The Committee therefore urges Deputy Southern to withdraw this part of his proposition and await the Committee's own proposition. Once again the Committee is determined to introduce any new system in time for the 2008 elections if the States support the proposals.

Paragraph (a)(v)

The Committee's proposals on the registration of political parties will include reference to the possibility of including affiliation on ballot papers and the Committee therefore believes that it would be more appropriate for members to address this issue in due course after an appropriate period of consultation and with a full background report from the Committee on the implications of this suggestion.

Paragraph (b)

The Committee is, of course, willing to bring forward legislation as necessary to give effect to any of the

proposals in paragraph (a) that are supported by the States.