

STATES OF JERSEY



E-PETITIONS: INTRODUCTION (P.123/2017) – AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 15th January 2018
by Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

E-PETITIONS: INTRODUCTION (P.123/2017) – AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

At the end of the paragraph insert the following words –

“except that e-petition signatures should not be accepted based on IP addresses, but should instead be accepted based on the States’ digital identification system to be introduced as part of the e-Government programme;”.

DEPUTY S.Y. MÉZEC OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Allowing the Public to directly influence events in the Assembly via petitions is an important part of our democracy, and all efforts to modernise this system to make it more accessible are to be welcomed.

Our system for the Assembly debating paper petitions is a good one which has stood the test of time, and has directly influenced some of the decisions we have made on behalf of the Public. But it is clear that as technology has improved, there is now a legitimate expectation that the system be accessible online. I fully support this ambition and voted in favour of [P.14/2017](#).

I have lodged this amendment for one very simple reason – **the method of recognising signatures proposed by PPC will be insecure and open to abuse, whereas the digital ID system will not be.**

If members of the Public wish to set up an ordinary petition and then draw States Members' attention to that petition in whichever way they see fit, they are free to do so. However, if that petition is to be part of the official parliamentary process which compels the Assembly to act in a certain way, then I believe a higher standard is required.

PPC's proposal suggests accepting signatures from a Jersey-based IP address, alongside a regular e-mail address. This system will be incredibly easy to manipulate in a convincing way, even for people with very limited IT skills. It will also disenfranchise young Jersey people who are studying at university outside the Island who would otherwise still be entitled to vote (via post), or Islanders who are on holiday.

The proposition's report states that they will adopt practices to mitigate bogus signatures. All of these will require oversight from a human being, which will take up time and will not necessarily capture all attempts to compromise the system.

The final paragraph of PPC's proposition refers to the States' digital ID plans and says that eventually, integration with this system will be desirable. I therefore ask the question, why would we propose spending tens of thousands of pounds pursuing a scheme which is not secure, and which is already acknowledged to have an imminent use-by date?

When the States of Jersey introduces its digital identification system, it will revolutionise how the Public engage with public services. It will be fully secure and will enable the development of all sorts of applications to expand what services we can use online.

The Assembly unanimously supported Reform Jersey's proposition to introduce online voting by 2022. Work will be underway to make this a reality. To add a petition application to the system will not be that complicated, but it will be fully secure.

This amendment asks the Assembly to go straight for the best option, rather than spend money on an interim solution which will be plagued by problems.

Financial and manpower implications

PPC have suggested a budget of £25,000 for the set-up costs for the e-petition infrastructure they are recommending, plus £15,000 for the first year of licensing and maintenance, then an additional £15,000 per year whilst it continues to operate. There will then presumably be a cost associated with dismantling this system and moving to a digital ID system. I am proposing that we do not spend this money on a system which will be dismantled soon anyway, and instead reserve any budget specifically for the digital ID system.