

STATES OF JERSEY



RE-INSTATEMENT OF SENATORS (P.2/2025): AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 4th March 2025
by Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South
Earliest date for debate: 18th March 2025

STATES GREFFE

RE-INSTATEMENT OF SENATORS (P.2/2025): AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

For the word “offices” substitute the word “office” and delete the words “Connétable and”.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

For the words “one Deputy from each of the nine electoral constituencies”, substitute the words, “the role of the Connétables as Voting Members”.

3 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

For the word “nine” substitute the word “twelve”.

DEPUTY T.A. COLES OF ST. HELIER SOUTH

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

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

(a) that the office of Senator, elected on an Island-wide basis, should sit alongside the office of Deputy in the States Assembly, and should be reinstated by removing the role of the Connétables as Voting Members and substituting twelve Senators in their place; and

(b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward the necessary legislative amendments to give effect to this proposition in time for the General Election in 2026.

REPORT

Summary

This amendment, if adopted, would allow the electoral system to be reformed to introduce a form of Island-wide voting without compromising on voter equity or simplicity.

It would remove the position of Connétable from the Assembly, allowing them to either focus purely on their parochial duties or seek election to the States via election to another office. Instead, their twelve seats in the Assembly would be allocated to Senators.

Report

Deputy Millar's report makes several valid arguments in favour of the concept of Island-wide voting. However, her proposed way of introducing it will create a more complex voting system with worse voter equity than the current system. It is also very similar to the 1948-2022 electoral system, which was widely unpopular. This amendment proposes a way to satisfy the arguments in favour of Island-wide voting, whilst moving our system forwards instead of backwards.

Voter Equity

Deputy Millar's original proposition highlights that the role of Senator was the most equitable elected office held in Jersey's history. This is correct, because every voter has the same number of votes, and every candidate has the same number of electorates. However, the overall balance of voter equity would be made worse by her choice to propose re-introducing Senators by removing a Deputy from each electoral district (see appendix 1).

In our current composition, and possible composition if P.2 is adopted unamended, the least equitable position of Connétable would remain. The evidence of this is shown when we compare St Helier, having the largest population of approx. 35,822, and St Mary, having the smallest of approx. 1,818, both having only 1 elected representative.

If we take a look at the table, set out in appendix 2, each Connétable would need to represent a population of 8,606, based on the 2021 census, for everything to be equal. As this would not be possible, within the confines of each Parish, the Connétables will never have an equal mandate.

It is not intellectually consistent to argue for re-introducing Senators on the basis that their election is most democratic, whilst proposing keeping the least democratic part of the electoral system, and in fact exacerbating it by removing nine Deputies whose seats had originally been apportioned to try to mitigate the malapportionment created by the presence of the Connétables.

Complexity

A three-tier voting system is axiomatically more complicated than a two-tier system.

As Jersey already suffers from extremely low voter turnout, making the voting system more complicated is counterintuitive. In the absence of moving to a logical one-tier system, not making things worse by staying with a two-tier system is sensible.

A two-tier system will be easier for voters (especially first-time voters) to engage with and understand. The less time that needs to be spent getting to grips with how a voting system works, the more time is available to consider the political issues that Islanders are actually interested in. Divisive and consequential political issues are more likely to inspire interest than bland and soulless explanations on how a system works.

Voter choice and influence

One reason some voters have reported nostalgia for the Senators is that they liked the ability to cast a larger number of votes than they do now (despite those votes carrying less weight than they do in a smaller constituency).

P.2 unamended would give voters between 12 to 14 votes. If this amendment is adopted, they will have between 15 and 17 votes. Voters will therefore be able to express a preference over a greater proportion of States Members and claim a greater influence in the make-up of the government.

Conclusion

To achieve Deputy Millar's objective, of returning the Senators to our Assembly, while maintaining or improving voter equity, the most logical option is to increase the number of Senators to 12 by replacing the Connétables.

Financial and staffing implications

There should be no additional financial and staffing implications than proposed within Deputy Millar original proposition. As the Connétables would no longer be an elected member of the Assembly, they would no longer be remunerated from the Assembly's budget.

If Connétables are to be remunerated for the position within the Parish, this would be a matter for each Parish to consider.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

A Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared in relation to this proposition and is available to read on the States Assembly website.

District	Population	P2 as proposed system	Residents per representative	Deviation	Amended P2 system	Residents per representative	Deviation
1. Grouville and St Martin	9,349	4	2337.25	10.46%	3	3116.33	-10.44%
2. St Brelade	11,012	4	2753.00	-6.22%	4	2753.00	1.38%
3. St Clement	9,925	4	2481.25	4.05%	4	2481.25	12.48%
4. St Helier Central	12,506	4.3	2886.00	-10.54%	5	2501.20	11.59%
5. St Helier North	12,135	3.3	3640.50	-29.08%	4	3033.75	-8.00%
6. St Helier South	11,181	3.3	3354.30	-23.03%	4	2795.25	-0.15%
7. St John, St Lawrence and Trinity	11,967	6	1994.50	29.44%	4	2991.75	-6.71%
8. St Mary, St Ouen and St Peter	11,288	6	1881.33	37.23%	4	2822.00	-1.10%
9. St Saviour	13,904	5	2780.80	-7.16%	5	2780.80	0.37%
All	103,267	40	2581.68		37	2791.00	
Positive percentage = Overrepresentation		Plus 9 Senators			Plus 12 Senators		
Negative percentage = Underrepresentation							

Appendix 1.

Population	Members	Ideal Pop Per Rep
103,267	12	8,606

Current Electoral Boundaries - CONSTABLES				
Constituency	Total	Constables	Pop per rep	Variance*
Grouville	5,401	1	5,401	37%
St Brelade	11,012	1	11,012	-28%
St Clement	9,925	1	9,925	-15%
St Helier	35,822	1	35,822	-316%
St John	3,051	1	3,051	65%
St Lawrence	5,561	1	5,561	35%
St Martin	3,948	1	3,948	54%
St Mary	1,818	1	1,818	79%
St Ouen	4,206	1	4,206	51%
St Peter	5,264	1	5,264	39%
St Saviour	13,904	1	13904	-62%
Trinity	3,355	1	3,355	61%

*Negative number = Under Representation

*Positive number = Over Representation

Sources:

<https://opendata.gov.je/dataset/2021-census/resource/8b9b106e-6bf6-400f-8a0b-a413204051e3>

<https://statesassembly.je/vote-detail?id=14576>