



The Reform of Jersey's States Assembly

What are your views on:

- The number of States members;
- The classes of States member;
- Their constituencies and mandates;
- Their terms of office?

Have your say

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STATES OF JERSEY
**ELECTORAL
COMMISSION**

The States of Jersey have established an Electoral Commission to make recommendations on the future composition of the States Assembly.

The Commission's terms of reference require it to consider:

- The classes of States member;
- Their constituencies and mandates;
- The number of States members;
- Their terms of office;

The Commission is keen to hear views from as many people as possible before developing its proposals. This leaflet sets out some of the issues that the Commission will need to consider and invites you to give your views.

The current structure

There are currently 51 elected members of the States:

- 10 Senators elected on an island-wide basis,
- 12 Parish Connétables (or Constables),
- 29 Deputies elected on a constituency basis, with the constituencies being either a whole parish or a district within a parish in the larger parishes.

Since 2011 all 3 categories of member have been elected for the same 3 year term of office.

Why reform the composition of the States?

There have been many attempts by the States in recent years to change the composition of the States. There have been a variety of concerns that have prompted these moves for reform.

The Commission needs your views to help it find a suitable solution

The view has often been expressed that the States Assembly has too many members for a small island. Some people consider that the current composition, with 3 different categories of member in one Chamber, is illogical and confusing for the public. Others are concerned about the low turnouts at election time and feel that a different system might encourage greater participation. There is also concern that the population is not accurately represented in the States because of the differences in the sizes of various constituencies.

The challenge for the Electoral Commission

Despite the many calls for reform the vast majority of reform proposals considered by the States in recent years have failed, with the only significant changes that have been agreed being the move to a single election day for all 3 categories of member and a reduction in the number of Senators from 12 to 10 (with a further reduction to 8 currently scheduled for 2014).

The challenge for the Electoral Commission is to design proposals that are an improvement on the current structure and that will be acceptable to both the States Assembly and, just as importantly, to the electorate in the referendum that will be held once the Commission's proposals have been finalised.

The Commission needs your views to help it find a suitable solution.



What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current 3 categories of members?

The Senators

Senators are elected on an island-wide basis and recent surveys of public opinion have shown that a large percentage of electors in Jersey greatly value the ability to vote for some candidates with an all-island mandate. In addition many islanders value the ability to vote for a number of Senators as well as their own parish representatives, as this enables them to influence the election of a greater number of States members.

Successful candidates in a senatorial election receive several thousand votes with the poll-topper in 2011 receiving 17,538 votes. It is often argued that this gives Senators a greater 'mandate' to take on positions of responsibility in the States (the 3 Chief Ministers to date, for example, have all been Senators). Senatorial elections provoke significant interest in the island with extensive media coverage and good attendance at the hustings meetings, and it has been argued by some that a senatorial election is the only election where major issues facing the Island are discussed in any real depth.

Being elected as a Senator is nevertheless no guarantee of being appointed to a position of responsibility in the States and, once elected, each Senator has no greater weight in the States Assembly than any other member. The present Council of Ministers, for example, is comprised of an equal number of Senators and Deputies.

Although the senatorial election receives considerable media attention, this level of interest could be said to be disproportionate when only a small number of Senators (who will be significantly outnumbered in the Assembly by the Connétables and Deputies) are being elected at any one time. It has been argued that the attention given to the senatorial election detracts from the coverage of parish-based elections for Connétables and Deputies, particularly since the introduction of a single election day.

The Connétables

The 12 Parish Connétables provide a direct link between the parishes and the States and traditionally Connétables have seen it as part of their rôle to represent the interests of their parishioners as a whole on any topic coming before the States. It is often argued that the strong and much-valued parish system in Jersey would be seriously undermined if the Connétables no longer sat in the States.

Once elected as Parish Connétables they automatically have a seat in the States. It is nevertheless clear that when electors vote for a Connétable they are fully aware that they are voting for someone who will sit in the States and Connétables have often taken on positions of significant responsibility in the States Assembly under both committee and ministerial government.

Although the link between the parishes and the States is an important one, some have nevertheless argued that Connétables have significant duties in their parishes and, as a result, will tend to give priority to parish responsibilities and therefore have less time available than Senators or Deputies for States work. In addition some have claimed that certain islanders who are interested in the life of their parish, and who might therefore be willing to stand for the position of Connétable, do not do so because they do not wish to serve as a States member as well.

Another concern that has often been expressed is that each Connétable represents a very different size electorate even though, once elected, each has the same weight and influence in the States Assembly. The combined total population of the 8 most rural and semi-rural parishes is 2,556 less than the population of St. Helier alone, even though these 8 parishes are represented in the Assembly by 8 Connétables compared to St. Helier which is represented by just one. It has often been argued that, as a result, the urban areas are currently under-represented in the Assembly.

The Deputies

The 29 Deputies provide direct local representation and many electors value the ability to contact their local Deputy with concerns or to seek advice. Many Deputies comment that they are often the first point of contact for constituents and Deputies are known to take up a significant number of issues on behalf of their parishioners. The relatively small size of most constituencies also means that Deputies can visit a significant proportion of households in person during an election campaign and there is evidence that electors value this opportunity to meet and discuss issues with those standing for election. Deputies provide a link between parishes/districts and the States and are able to represent the interests of their constituents in matters that come before the Assembly whilst still being able to engage in wider issues affecting the whole island.

A concern that has nevertheless been expressed by some is that because of the different population sizes between the parishes and the changes in population since the current Deputies' constituencies were first established, there are now significant discrepancies between the sizes of the electorates of different Deputies. The number of residents per Deputy is, for example, 1,752 in St. Mary, 3,352 in St. Helier and 5,003 in St. Peter (with an average across the island of 3,374 residents per Deputy).

Concern has also been expressed by some that Deputies can be elected with a very small number of votes, with 2 successful candidates in 2011, for example, being elected with just 291 and 339 votes. There is also concern that some voters can only vote for one Deputy whereas others can vote for up to 4, and this discrepancy in constituency sizes obviously affects the number of votes received by candidates with, for example, the successful candidate who came 4th in St. Helier No 3 district in 2011 receiving over 5 times the number of votes of the successful candidate in St. Mary.

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The number of States members

There are currently 51 elected members. The States agreed in 2010 that the number of elected members should be reduced from 53 to 49 by 2014 and, unless reform is agreed before 2014 it will be necessary to elect 8 Senators, 12 Connétables and 29 Deputies on one single election day in October that year.

The view is often expressed that there are too many States members and most reform proposals in recent years have suggested that the size of the Assembly should be reduced. Others have nevertheless expressed concern that any significant reduction in the number of members would mean that the public were less well represented at a political level and there have also been concerns that there would be insufficient members to hold Ministers to account if the number of members was reduced.

What do you think?

The Electoral Commission needs to make recommendations on the entire structure of the States. The Commission will need to recommend how many elected members there should be and whether some or all of the current 3 categories of States member should be retained or whether an entirely new structure should be proposed. The Commission values your views on these issues.

- What are your views on the island-wide mandate, the role of the Connétables and the position of Parish Deputies?
- Do you think there are too many or too few elected members or is the current number of 51 about right?
- Is this current structure with 3 separate categories of members acceptable or should a revised structure be put in place?
- How often should elections be held?

Have your say

Your views will help the Commission to make its recommendations. You can give your views in the following ways:

Write to:

**Electoral Commission
Morier House
St Helier
Jersey
JE1 1DD**

By email:

ec@gov.je

Visit our website:

www.electoralcommission.je

Views should be submitted no later than the end of August 2012 and submissions must include your full name and contact details. The Commission will also be holding public hearings in June and July to enable people to give their views in that way. If you would like to give evidence at one of these hearings you should firstly set out your views in writing and let us know in your written submission that you would also like to give your views at a hearing.

Your submission will be made public and will be attributed to you unless you request confidentiality, in which case the reasons for non-disclosure will need to be accepted by the Commission.

