

Deadline: 9 Sept

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Background

INTRODUCTION

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 was appointed by the House on 13 June 2019. The remit of the Committee is to carry out post-legislative scrutiny of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA Act, the Act) and to make recommendations to the Government. The Committee is required to agree its report by the end of March 2020.

The ERA Act introduced individual registration, replacing the household registration system. In conjunction with this, it gave powers to Government to reform or abolish the annual canvass of electors. It also made a number of changes to electoral administration including, for example, the extension of the timetable for parliamentary elections, a requirement for additional notices of alteration to registers when an election is pending, and a power to reduce the fees of returning officers on grounds of inadequate performance.

The Committee is now issuing this Call for Evidence and hopes to gather as much evidence as possible on the operation of the Act as well as on the key issues and challenges in relation to electoral registration and administration.

A list of questions is set out below. Respondents who are able to answer all of the questions are welcome to do so. However there is no obligation to answer every question and the Committee welcomes evidence that addresses any of the subjects raised, even if you only feel able to respond to one of the questions on the list below.

The Committee encourages respondents to interpret the questions broadly and to provide as much information as possible that may be of use to its inquiry.

Diversity comes in many forms, and hearing a range of different perspectives means that Committees are better informed and can more effectively scrutinise public policy and legislation. Committees can undertake their role most effectively when they hear from a wide range of individuals, sectors or groups in society affected by a particular policy or piece of legislation. We encourage anyone with experience or expertise of an issue under investigation by a select

committee to share their views with the committee, with the full knowledge that their views have value and are welcome.

This is a public call for written evidence to be submitted to the Committee. The deadline is 4pm on 9 September 2019.

Questions

Individual electoral registration

1. Has the introduction of individual electoral registration been a positive development overall? Has it achieved its objectives, and how does it compare with the previous household registration system?
2. How well was the transition to individual electoral registration managed? How might it have been done differently?
3. What other steps are necessary to improve the electoral registration process, and to increase the accuracy and completeness of registers in particular? Has there been sufficient Government focus on completeness of registers?
4. What other non-legislative measures might be necessary to encourage registration among groups that may be harder to reach? What are the main obstacles in this respect? *Groups that may be harder to reach may include: students, BAME groups, attainers, frequent home movers, British citizens living abroad, people with long term health conditions, disabled people, and Commonwealth and EU Nationals, among others.*

Electoral fraud

5. Has the Act been an effective measure in its stated intention of tackling electoral fraud? How has the implementation of the Act addressed offences such as personation and duplicate voting, and do further steps need to be taken to tackle these?
6. How widespread are other voting fraud offences, such as postal vote fraud, in UK elections? What measures are needed to address these?

Annual canvass

7. Is the annual canvass fit for purpose? What are its main strengths and weaknesses?
8. Are the Government's plans to reform the annual canvass the right approach? To what extent are measures such as data matching a viable alternative to the full canvass?
9. What has been the impact of introducing online registration? What challenges has this created for electoral administration?

Electoral administration

10. Do you think that elections in the United Kingdom are currently well managed and regulated overall? If not, why not?

11. Sections 14-23 of the Act made a range of changes to electoral administration. What has been the impact of these changes? Do any of them merit reconsideration or revision?

Changes set out in Sections 14-23 included:

- *Extending the Parliamentary election timetable from 17 to 25 days*
- *Enabling parish and community council elections to be held on the same day as a combined local and parliamentary election*
- *Providing for the publication of two additional notices of alteration to the electoral register during an election period*
- *Allowing the Secretary of State to reduce a returning officer's fee for reason of poor performance, on the recommendation of the Electoral Commission*
- *Allowing voters queueing at polling stations at close of poll to be issued with ballot papers*
- *Requiring EROs to inform voters when their postal ballot paper has been rejected*
- *Repealing legislation to establish a coordinated online record of electors*

12. What other measures may be necessary to ensure that electoral administration is fit for purpose and that administrators are able to fulfil their roles effectively?

Other matters

13. What is your view of the Government's proposals to require people to bring personal identification when casting a vote?
14. Is the Act (or any of its provisions) having unintended consequences? If so, what are these?