

# Citizens' Convention (Accountability and Ethics) Bill

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**B I L L**

TO

Make provision to set up a Citizens' Convention for the purposes of establishing minimum standards of ethics for Members of Parliament and for promoting the involvement of citizens in political decision making; and for connected purposes.

**B**E IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

**1 Purpose**

The purpose of this Act is to establish minimum ethical standards for Members of Parliament and to promote the involvement of citizens in political decision making by means of the establishment of a Citizen's Convention.

**2 Establishment of Citizens' Convention**

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(1) The Electoral Commission must, within 12 months of the date on which this Act is passed, establish a Citizens' Convention ("the Convention").

(2) The Convention is to consist of no fewer than 100 people eligible to vote in a general election.

(3) The selection of people to serve on the Convention must be random, subject to the requirements of subsection (5). 10

(4) No person shall be required to serve on the Convention unless they consent to do so.

(5) The Electoral Commission must take reasonable steps to ensure that membership of the Commission reflects the composition of the electorate in the United Kingdom. 15

**3 Functions of Citizen's Convention**

(1) In pursuance of the purpose of this Act, the Commission must give consideration to, and make recommendations on, the following—

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- (a) allowances and expenses payable to Members of Parliament,
- (b) the system or systems of election to each House of Parliament,
- (c) the means by which electors may hold to account Members of Parliament, including any mechanism for the recall or disqualification of such Members, 5
- (d) the way in which business is conducted in both Houses of Parliament,
- (e) the funding of political parties.
- (2) The Convention may undertake, or commission other persons or organisations to undertake, such research as it considers appropriate.
- (3) The Convention shall take reasonable steps to publicise its work and to encourage the submission of evidence to it from all parts of the United Kingdom. 10
- (4) The Convention may establish sub-groups on specific issues within its remit and invite people who are not members of the Convention to participate in such groups. 15
- (5) The Convention must publish any recommendations made under subsection 3(1) as soon as reasonably practicable, and no later than 12 months after the date on which it was established.
- (6) The Convention may publish recommendations under this section in a single report or in a series of reports. 20
- (7) For the avoidance of doubt, references in this Act to Members of Parliament includes Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords.
- 4 Procedure and funding of the Convention**
- (1) The Convention may determine its own rules and proceedings, which may include provision for the selection of a chairman and for the conduct of meetings. 25
- (2) *The Secretary of State may make payments to members and staff of the Convention by way of remuneration and in respect of expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties.*
- (3) *The Secretary of State may also defray any other expenses of the Convention.* 30
- 5 Reports of the Convention**
- (1) The Prime Minister must lay before both Houses of Parliament any report published by the Convention under section 3.
- (2) The Prime Minister must, not later than three months after the date on which a report is laid under subsection (1), make a motion in the House of Commons expressing support for the recommendations contained in the report. 35
- (3) The recommendations contained shall be subject to a referendum if –
- (a) any motion made under subsection (2) is disagreed to, and
- (b) if a petition calling for a referendum on any of the recommendations and signed by at least 5 per cent of electors is submitted to the Electoral Commission. 40

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- (4) The Electoral Commission shall publish rules governing the submission of petitions and the holding of any referendum under this section.
- (5) The Prime Minister must ensure that a referendum is held in accordance the rules published by the Electoral Commission under subsection (5).
- (6) The Secretary of State shall not implement any recommendation of the Convention if a majority of participants in any referendum held under this section oppose it. 5

## 6 Expenses

*There shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament –*

- (a) *any expenditure incurred under or by virtue of this Act by the Secretary of State, and* 10
- (b) *any increase attributable to this Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided.*

## 7 Short title

This Act may be cited as the Citizens' Convention (Ethics and Accountability) Act 2009. 15

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To make provision to set up a Citizens' Convention for the purposes of establishing minimum standards of ethics for Members of Parliament and for promoting the involvement of citizens in political decision making; and for connected purposes.

*Presented by Mr Martin Caton  
supported by  
Norman Lamb, Mr Douglas Carswell,  
Mr David Drew, Julia Goldsworthy,  
Jim Dowd and Norman Baker.*

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons,  
to be Printed, 8 June 2009.*

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