

Referendum on the UK Parliamentary voting system: December 2010 campaigner update

The Government has proposed a referendum on the UK Parliamentary voting system on 5 May 2011.

Parliament is considering the Bill enabling the referendum. The Bill also sets out how the referendum would be run, and makes changes to the rules that campaigners must follow.

We published initial guidance for campaigners in November 2010, and we will publish final guidance when the rules are confirmed.

We understand that campaigners may want to start planning before this, so this series of updates will highlight key points that may be helpful.

About this update

This update is based on the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill as passed by the House of Commons (the Bill). It is now being considered by the House of Lords.

Parliament may amend the Bill, so some of the information may change. We will highlight any changes in future updates.

We will publish updates at key stages in the parliamentary process. You can sign up to receive these updates by calling 020 7271 0616 or emailing pef@electoralcommission.org.uk.

This fourth update covers:

- the rules on the use of the full electoral register
- working with disability organisations on campaign material

Rules on the use of the full electoral register

Some campaigners have asked about the rules on when they can access the full electoral register for use in the referendum campaign. A summary of the rules is below. We can provide further information if campaigners have specific questions on this topic.

What can the register be used for?

Those campaigners who register with us as a campaigner at the referendum will be entitled to a copy of the full electoral register. They can only use the register for two purposes – to campaign in the referendum, and to comply with the rules on donations (by checking that individuals who donate more than £500 to the campaign are on an electoral register, and are therefore permissible donors).

When can campaigners register?

Campaigners can apply to register with us as soon as the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill receives Royal Assent. This is not now expected to happen before late January at the earliest. We intend to work with the Cabinet Office to produce a single contact list of Electoral Registration Officers, including email addresses, to help campaigners who have registered with us to obtain the electoral register promptly.

Registered political parties and recognised third parties

Those organisations that are registered political parties or recognised third parties are already entitled to a copy of the full register for electoral purposes, and in order to comply with the rules on donations to parties and third parties. However, such organisations cannot disclose or make use of any information in the register for any other purpose, including purposes connected with the referendum campaign, unless or until they become registered as a campaigner for the referendum. This includes the preparatory processing of data. Prospective campaigners that hold a copy of the full register as a political party or recognised third party should contact us if in any doubt about how these restrictions may apply to their use of the register.

Accessibility of campaign material

There are a number of organisations that can assist campaigners in understanding and meeting the needs of voters with disabilities in their campaigning material. If you are interested in working with disability organisations to discuss accessibility issues, please let us know by email on pef@electoralcommission.org.uk.

We are currently obtaining contact details for those disability organisations that would like to get involved in this work and we will provide this information in January 2011 to all those who declare an interest.

Where you can find more information

For advice and guidance

We are always happy to give prospective campaigners advice on how to comply with the rules.

Please contact us on 020 7271 0616, www.electoralcommission.org.uk or pef@electoralcommission.org.uk, or at our **new** address:

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The Electoral Commission
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You can also contact:

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Join our update list

You can sign up to receive these updates by calling 020 7271 0616 or emailing

pef@electoralcommission.org.uk.

For other information about the referendum

On our website, www.electoralcommission.org.uk, you can find:

- our guidance for referendum campaigners
- more information about our role in referendums
- our key principles for running referendums
- our approach to assessing referendum questions
- our findings on the referendum question
- briefings on the Bill explaining our position on provisions where appropriate