

Statement

Issued By

Lawyers For Seanad Reform

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Junior Minister Hayes Distances Himself From Bruton's €100m Gaffe

Junior Minister Brian Hayes has publicly distanced himself in a debate on Newstalk Radio this morning from Minister Bruton's wild claim that abolition of the Seanad would save €100 million.

He indicated that he now believed that cost was not the important reason for abolition.

The embarrassing "€100m" own goal was the centre piece of Minister Bruton's referendum campaign launch last week.

The Clerk of the Dail, Kieran Coughlan, had publicly testified to a recent Oireachtas hearing that the real gross annual *direct* cost of the current Seanad is €9.2m.

On that basis, net of taxes, USC and other levies, the true annual abolition saving would be €6.5m.

This amounts to an annual cost per head of the population of about one euro, fifty eight cent!! (say €1.60)

Even that cost could be reduced in a reformed Seanad by halving future Senators' pay, expenses and allowances.

Lawyers for Seanad Reform believes strongly that the important constitutional roles of the Seanad in revising and improving legislation, protecting the President and judiciary from removal by the Dail, and preventing loss of our tax veto and other important legal and constitutional rights to the EU under Article 29 of the Constitution is worth more than €1.60 per person per year.

We believe that a single chamber parliament ruled by the Government's whip should not be able to remove the President and judges. It should not be allowed to quietly surrender our EU tax veto or give away our right to insist on unanimity in EU matters under Article 29.

Saving €1.60 per person annually simply does not justify wrecking our constitutional system of checks and balances.

Dail Reform Does Not Depend on Abolition Either

While understandably running away from the disastrous, bogus "costs" argument, Junior Minister Hayes now claimed on radio that the real issue in referendum is reform of the Dail. That claim is totally bogus.

Dail reform does not need Seanad abolition and will not be helped by Seanad abolition in any way. The referendum has nothing to do with Dail reform. Full stop.

There is absolutely nothing stopping the Dail from reforming itself today; indeed it could have done so at any point since 2011 but has not been done.

The Government already tried unsuccessfully to confuse the two issues by proposing to insert a hare-brained Dail Super-Committee into their referendum proposal but it was "laughed out" as completely undemocratic and foolish.

Voting to abolish the Seanad has absolutely nothing to do with voting to reform the Dail. But this con-job is, apparently on the basis of Junior Minister Hayes's statement today, the next propaganda stunt being planned for September by same the people who brought you the "€100m saving" stunt.

What Can And Must Be Done

Lawyers for Seanad Reform reiterates that Ireland badly needs a reformed Seanad elected by the people, with gender balance, votes for passport-holder citizens abroad and citizens in Northern Ireland, and with enhanced functions and scrutiny roles.

This can be all done *now without any referendum*, simply by passing the reform Bills currently before two Houses.

The Government's abolition referendum, which will cost more than €15m, *deforms* rather than reforms Irish democracy.

ENDS