Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill

Bill Number: SP Bill 24
Introduced on: 11 March 2013
Introduced by: Nicola Sturgeon
Passed: 27 June 2013
Royal Assent: 7 August 2013

2013 asp 13

Passage of the Bill

The Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill (SP Bill 24) was introduced by the Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, on 11 March 2013.

The remit of the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee, established on 23 October 2012, was to consider matters relating to the Referendum Bill and any associated legislation. It would, therefore, be the lead Committee for the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill, and this was confirmed on 19 March 2013.

The Committee issued a general call for written evidence on 12 March 2013. The Committee took oral evidence on the Bill at Stage 1 at its meetings on 14 March, 21 March and 28 March 2013 and discussed its draft Stage 1 report in private on 18 and 25 April and 2 May 2013.

The Bill was also considered by the Subordinate Legislation Committee (19 March 2013) and the Finance Committee (20 March 2013).

The Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee’s Stage 1 report was published on 7 May 2013.

The Stage 1 debate took place on in the Chamber 14 May 2013.

The Stage 2 consideration of the Bill by the Committee took place on 6 June 2013.
The **Stage 3 of the Bill** took place on 27 June 2013, when the Bill was passed by the Parliament.

The Bill received Royal Assent on 7 August 2013.

**Purpose and objectives of the Bill**

The purpose of the Bill was to establish the franchise for the referendum on independence which is to take place on 18 September 2014. The franchise for Scottish elections is a reserved matter so, prior to the Bill being introduced by the Scottish Government, an order amending Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998, had to be approved by the UK and Scottish Parliaments and made by the Privy Council.

**Provisions of the Bill**

The Bill, which was the first piece of legislation introduced by the Scottish Government in relation to the referendum on Scottish independence, set out the franchise for the Referendum. The franchise was based on the one used for Scottish local government elections, with the eligible age reduced from 18 to 16 years old.

The Bill established a Register of Young Voters to hold information on eligible young voters, who would be at 16 years old on the day of the referendum, who were not eligible to be entered in the usual annual household canvass used to create the local government electoral register.

**Parliamentary consideration**

In order to give election officers time, to make the practical changes necessary to increase the franchise to include 16 and 17 year olds, the Scottish Government needed the Bill to be passed before end of June 2013.

The Bill was subject to a number of Government amendments at Stages 2 and 3, which addressed concerns about the registration information gathered on young voters would be treated sensitively and kept securely. Some of the Government amendments followed testing of the canvass form by election officers.

Amendments at Stage 2 and 3, which sought to increase the franchise to include certain categories of prisoners, were not successful.