

## **Call for evidence on the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill**

The Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee has been established to consider the legislation relating to the forthcoming referendum on independence.

The Committee is already scrutinising the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill, which was introduced on 11 March. It now invites written evidence on the general principles of the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, which was introduced on 21 March. A copy of the Bill and its accompanying documents can be found at:

[Scottish Independence Referendum Bill](#)

### **Aims of the Bill**

The Bill provides for a referendum on Scottish independence to be held on Thursday 18 September 2014. In particular, the Bill:

- provides for the date of the referendum, the question to be asked and the form of the ballot paper (schedule 1)
- requires Ministers to appoint a Chief Counting Officer, and for him or her to appoint counting officers, and defines their functions
- provides for the manner of voting, registration, the handling of postal votes and the supply of Polling Lists (schedule 2)
- sets out conduct rules (schedule 3)
- sets out campaign rules – including in respect of campaign organisations, permitted participants and expenses (schedule 4)
- defines the role of the Electoral Commission in overseeing the referendum, including in providing information to voters and guidance to the Chief Counting Officer, and in relation to campaign rules (schedule 5)
- makes provision about civil sanctions (schedule 6) and offences (in schedule 7)

Further details on the Bill are contained in the Policy Memorandum and Explanatory Notes.

### **Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee consideration**

The Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee plans to take oral evidence on the Bill during May, and to report to the Parliament immediately after the summer recess (i.e. in early September). It is expected that the Finance Committee and the Subordinate Legislation Committee will also consider aspects of the Bill that fall within their remits, and report on them to this Committee.

Written submissions to the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee may cover any aspect of the Bill or its implementation. Witnesses may, in particular, wish to comment on some or all of the following:

- the date of the referendum and the wording of the question
- the conduct rules

- the campaign rules
- the role of the Electoral Commission
- the proposed limits on funding for campaign organisations and political parties.

Please note that the remit of the Committee is to scrutinise the legislation that will enable a referendum to take place, and not to scrutinise the wider arguments for and against independence itself – which are for the people of Scotland to decide in September 2014.

Written evidence should be submitted by no later than **Thursday 6 June 2013**. Witnesses are encouraged to submit evidence ahead of this deadline if possible, so that any points raised can be taken into account by as many as possible of those invited to give oral evidence. (Submissions made after 6 June will still be circulated to the Committee but it may be more difficult for them to be taken fully into account in the Committee's Stage 1 Report.)

### **How to submit written evidence**

Written evidence should normally not exceed six pages in length and should, if possible, be submitted electronically (preferably in MS Word format) to the Committee clerks at [referendum.committee@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:referendum.committee@scottish.parliament.uk). It may also be posted to Clerk to the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee, Room T2.60, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

Before submitting evidence please read the Parliament's [policy on the treatment of written evidence](#). Any queries should be directed to the Committee clerks, whose details are available on the [Committee's web-page](#).

### **Contact**

Any queries about written submissions should be addressed in the first instance to the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee clerking team at the above email address or (0131) 348 5417.