

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1901](#): Replace the voting system of the Scottish Parliament with a more proportional alternative, lodged by Richard Wood.

Scottish Parliament Additional Member System

Elections to the Scottish Parliament are carried out using the mixed member proportional Additional Member System (AMS). This voting system combines first-past-the-post and proportional representation using a formula known as the d'Hondt method.

A first vote is used to elect a named candidate for a geographically defined single member constituency. A second vote is used to elect an 'additional' member. This vote is cast for a political party or an independent candidate on a regional ballot.

Each registered political party standing in the regional ballot will have submitted a list of their candidates in order of the party's preference. The regional vote is intended to make representation in the Parliament more proportional.

Voter Choice and Decoy Parties

- Both regional and constituency lists are closed meaning the party rather than the electorate chooses the preferred candidates.
- Voters may choose to support one party in the constituency and another in the regional vote.
- Decoy parties are small parties which may stand in AMS electoral systems, but which have the tacit support of a larger party.

MSPs

- Constituency MSPs and regional MSPs have equal status in the Scottish Parliament.

- The different terms are used only to differentiate between the size of the geographical areas they represent and the way in which they were elected.
- MSPs are paid the same whether they represent a constituency or a region.

Proportional Voting Systems

- Single Transferable Vote (STV): Uses multiple-member electoral districts or regions with each voter ranking preferred candidates on a single ballot. Scottish local elections take place by STV. There is concern over the 'list order effect'.
- Open List Proportional Representation (Open List PR): Variant of party-list proportional representation where voters have influence over the preference order of party candidates.

List order effect

- The names of candidates for elections in Scotland (and in the rest of the UK) are listed on the ballot paper alphabetically by surname.
- It has been suggested that candidates nearer the top of the list are more likely to be selected. This is known as the 'list order effect'.
- The Session 5, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee consulted on the "list order effect" in local elections as part of their scrutiny of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill. The committee concluded that there is evidence that the list order effect could be unfair on certain candidates. The committee recommended that the Scottish Government asks [the Electoral Commission to consider again](#) local election ballot paper formats.
- The [Scottish Elections \(Reform\) Act 2020](#) did not make changes to the list order on ballot papers in local elections

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government's [Electoral Reform Consultation Analysis](#) (12 October 2018) received views relevant to this petition:

- Dissatisfaction with parties selecting regional list MSPs.

- Criticism of dual candidacy in AMS and introduction of term limits for regional list MSPs.
- Some support for STV to be used in all elections in Scotland.

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12/10/2021

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