

Dear Sirs,

I refer to the Department's invitation for submissions in relation to electoral register reform.

There are a number of improvements that could be made to the voting system to increase participation amongst the electorate. However, there is one improvement in particular that I have always felt should be an option open generally to people and one for which arrangements are already in place, that is postal ballots.

It seems to me that there can be no excuse why postal voting is not available to all persons on the register of electors. There are many circumstances in which a citizen cannot be present on a given day to vote but does wish to exercise their right and disenfranchising them for no good reason is simply unjust and indefensible.

A simple example of such a circumstance may be where someone has booked holidays 6-9 months in advance, as is the case for the vast majority of families, and suddenly an election is called 3-4 weeks from the proposed polling day which falls within the holiday period booked by the citizen. It seems wholly unacceptable to me that such people would be denied their right to vote and be stuck with a representative for 5 years that they would not have voted for purely as a result of an unhappy coincidence.

In the absence of a more technological solution (i.e. online voting using a pin numbering system similar to that employed by banks when sending out new pin numbers for debit/credit cards or online banking systems) extending postal voting to all persons on the register seems like a sensible step that ought to have been taken many years ago. I would therefore urge the Department to extend this to all registered voters.

In addition, the State has a very extensive database of citizens living in the country by way of passport databases, passport databases and PPS number databases to name but a few, which could be utilised to register all persons over the age of 18 at the address supplied by that person. In the vast majority of cases these people also provide mobile telephone numbers and email addresses which could be used to correspond with them to either confirm their address details or to obtain their updated information.

I would be happy to elaborate further on any of the above should you require further input from me.

Yours sincerely,

Niall Sexton