

THE LORD SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS - BRIEFING

Why did the House of Lords elect a Speaker?

On 12 June 2003 the Prime Minister's Office announced changes including an end to the judicial function of the Lord Chancellor and his role as Speaker of the House of Lords, the creation of a Department for Constitutional Affairs and new arrangements for Judicial appointments.

The House of Lords appointed a select committee on the Speakership of the House in 2003 and again in 2005, both chaired by Lord Lloyd of Berwick. The committees' recommendations form the basis of the arrangements for a Lord Speaker which the House has agreed.

What were the election arrangements?

5 June 2006 (5pm)	Closing date for candidatures
6 June 2006	Candidates list published and sent to all members of the House of Lords, together with a statement of each candidate's parliamentary service, their entry in the Register of Lords' Interests, and election addresses of up to 75 words
7 June 2006	Ballot papers for those requesting a postal vote
28 June 2006 (10am to 8pm)	Voting
4 July 2006 (2.30pm)	Result announced

How was the result announced?

On 4 July the Lord Chancellor, Lord Falconer of Thoroton, processed into the Chamber for prayers for the last time. The Clerk of the Parliaments announced the name of the successful candidate after prayers (i.e. shortly after 2.30pm). The Lord Chamberlain signified Her Majesty's approval from the Despatch box. The new Lord Speaker then took over the Woolsack from the Lord Chancellor.

Does the role of the new Lord Speaker differ from that of the current Lord Chancellor in exercising his duties as Speaker?

Unlike the Lord Chancellor the Lord Speaker:

- can offer procedural advice to the House, except at question time

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- takes the chair in Committee of the whole House
- makes the preliminary decision on Private Notice Questions
- decides on the *Sub judice* rule
- acts as an ambassador for the House of Lords both in the UK and abroad
- chairs the House Committee
- is responsible for security
- is not appointed by the Prime Minister
- is elected by the House
- is not a member of the Cabinet and has no government department
- has no judicial role in the House of Lords.

What is the Speaker's title?

The Lord Speaker (whether a man or a woman).

How does the role of the Lord Speaker affect the current roles of the Leader of the House, the Government Chief Whip and the Chairman of Committees?

The role of the **Leader of the House** during question time is not affected but decisions on the *Sub judice* rule **and preliminary** decisions on Private Notice Questions are taken by the Lord Speaker.

The **Government Chief Whip** continues to advise the House on speaking times in debates, but the Lord Speaker can assist on questions of procedural guidance.

The **Chairman of Committees** remains the spokesman of the House Committee in the Chamber but ceased to be its Chairman when the Lord Speaker was elected. The Lord Speaker has responsibility for security of the House of Lords parts of the parliamentary estate.

How long can a Lord Speaker serve?

The Lord Speaker is elected for a maximum of 5 years and may serve for no more than two terms.

How much is the Lord Speaker paid?

The Lord Speaker's salary is £103,701. This is the same salary as a Cabinet Minister in the Lords. In addition the Lord Speaker is entitled to an office-holder's allowance, currently £33,990 (220 times the overnight allowance for backbench members) [as at 1 November 2006].

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Can the Lord Speaker claim any other allowances?

The Lord Speaker can recover the same expenses as other office-holders, namely:

- secretarial expenses incurred in respect of Parliamentary duties, subject to an annual limit of £5,025 per annum. (Secretarial support will be provided for Speaker duties – see below)
- travelling expenses between home and the House of Lords
- expenses of a spouse or civil partner and dependent children travelling to a parliamentary occasion in London (subject to a maximum of 15 return trips per person per annum).

How does the role of Lord Speaker differ from the Speaker of the House of Commons?

The House of Lords remains self-regulating. The Lord Speaker has no power to act in the House without the consent of the House so:

- does not call the House to order or rule on points of order as the Commons Speaker does
- does not call members to speak
- does not select amendments.

How many Deputy Speakers are there?

There are presently 25 Deputy Speakers and 22 Deputy Chairmen. It is proposed that the panel of active Deputies should in due course be reduced to about 12.

How are they chosen?

Each session the House appoints a panel of Deputy Chairmen, nominated by the Committee of Selection. From time to time (most recently in 2005) Her Majesty the Queen appoints current members of the panel as Deputy Speakers.

What ceremonial duties does the Speaker perform?

The Lord Speaker:

- participates in the State Opening of Parliament (but she does not hand the Speech to Her Majesty the Queen)
- takes part in state and parliamentary events in Westminster Hall
- is usually a member of the Royal Commission for Prorogation (the means by which a session of Parliament is prorogued – i.e. brought to an end).

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What does the Lord Speaker wear?

In the Chamber the Lord Speaker wears a gown but no wig. On ceremonial occasions she wears either parliamentary robes or ceremonial robes in black with a gold trim.

What staff does the Speaker have?

The Lord Speaker has one Private Secretary and one Assistant Private Secretary (about to be increased to two) and draws on support from other offices.

What office and other accommodation does the Lord Speaker have?

The Lord Speaker and associated staff have taken over some of the office accommodation which was occupied by the Lord Chancellor and his staff. The rest of the office accommodation will return to the House of Lords for its use, in due course.

Some of the former Lord Chancellor's apartment (the residence) will be used by the Lord Speaker for, for example, meeting visiting parliamentarians. There will be overnight accommodation but the apartment will not be used as a residence. The rest will be used by the House itself. The River Room, adjacent to the Lord Chancellor's former apartment, remains the principal State Room of the House of Lords and is used for official entertaining and (subject to the Lord Speaker's approval in each case) for charitable events sponsored by members of the House of Lords.

DECEMBER 2006

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