



## Private Members' Bills: Ballot 2017

This note describes the practical arrangements for the Private Members' Bills Ballot 2017

### What is a Private Members' Bill?

1. A Private Members' Bill is a bill sponsored by a Member other than a Minister of the Crown. These bills are considered on the floor of the House only on Private Members' Bill Fridays.

### What is the Private Members' Bill Ballot?

2. The ballot for Private Members' Bills presents an opportunity to be one of the first 20 Members to introduce a Private Member's Bill in the 2017-18 Session and the first seven are likely to gain guaranteed debating time for the Bill's second reading on a Private Members' Bill Friday.

### How do I enter the ballot and when does it take place?

3. In order to enter the ballot Members need to enter their names against a number in the ballot book. The ballot book will be available to sign on **Tuesday 27 June** and **Wednesday 28 June** in the No Division Lobby when the House is sitting (except during a division).
4. The ballot draw itself will be held in public at 9am in Committee Room 10 on **Thursday 29 June**, the second Thursday after the Queen's Speech. Twenty numbers - against which Members have signed their names - are picked at random by the Clerk Assistant under the authority and supervision of the Chairman of Ways and Means. Precedence is assigned in reverse order, i.e. the last name out is awarded the No. 1 slot for his or her Bill.

### How will I know if my name has been drawn?

5. You may attend the ballot and it will be streamed live on parliamentlive.tv. Also, the twenty names are tweeted, emailed and phoned around the parliamentary grapevine at great speed. Formally, the

list of Members drawn, 1-20, is pinned up in the No lobby, and then made available from the Vote Office, Table Office and via the website, as soon after the ballot as possible. The successful twenty Members will be contacted directly by the Public Bill Office.

6. Members drawn at the top of the ballot should expect a very large number of approaches from individuals and organisations with suggestions of the legislation they should bring forward.

### What happens next?

7. To secure the all-important precedence for their Bill on a sitting Friday, the Members whose names are drawn in the ballot must formally present their Bills at the opportunity reserved for them which this year is on **Wednesday 19 July**, the fifth sitting Wednesday of the Session. (A Member who knows that he or she will be away from Westminster on that day can give written notice on a previous day that another, named Member will present the Bill on his or her behalf).
8. But before that, Members must give 'notice of presentation' of the short and long titles of their Bill on a sitting day before presentation and, at the latest, by the rising of the House on **Tuesday 18 July**, the day before presentation. This may be done in person in the Public Bill Office on any sitting day up to the rising of the House by the Member concerned or by another Member acting on his or her behalf.

### What kind of subjects can I choose?

9. Subject to one principal exception, Private Members' Bills can relate to any subject matter that is suitable for public legislation. The exception is that a Private Member's Bill may not have as its main purpose the creation of a 'charge upon the people' (a new tax, a tax increase or a similar kind of charge) or of a 'charge upon the public purse' (the establishment of a new cause for public expenditure).

10. When a Member has decided what the Bill will be about, a 'long title' and 'short title' will need to be settled. The short title is an encapsulation of a bill's subject area and distinguishes the bill from other bills introduced in the same session; it cannot be a slogan. The long title is a brief summary of the planned contents of a bill.
11. Ideally, a long title is settled after a draft of the bill has been prepared. However, where the text of the Bill is not ready at the time when notice of presentation must be given, care should be taken to ensure that the long title will not unintentionally restrict the subsequent content of the Bill. The Public Bill Office can advise on matters relating to the long and short titles of a Bill and its contents more generally.
12. Members will also have the option of producing a 'Statement of purpose' for their Bill. In the absence of a full draft of the Bill this short document, which would be published online once the Bill has been presented, gives Members the chance to describe the purpose of their Bill.

### How are the bills formally presented?

13. The Members whose names are drawn in the ballot and who have given notice of presentation (or those acting on their behalf) will present their Bills, in the reverse order to that in which their names were drawn, immediately after questions and statements on **Wednesday 19 July**.
14. On the day of presentation, Members in fact present what is called a 'dummy Bill'. This is a single sheet of card prepared by the Public Bill Office which sets out the long and short titles of the Bill, the names of supporters (and date for second reading if decided). Each Member presenting a Bill must collect the dummy Bill in person from the Public Bill Office before 10am on the day of presentation.
15. Members may have up to 11 supporters for their Bill (so that 12 names, including their own, may appear on the dummy Bill and the subsequent printed Bill). When they have obtained the agreement of the Members concerned, they should inform the Public Bill Office of the names of those supporters in the order in which they are to appear on the dummy Bill, no later than the morning of the day before the day of presentation.
16. At the time of presentation, Members line up behind the Speaker's chair in the order of presentation and, when called by the Speaker, hand their dummy Bills

to the Clerk of the House at the Table. The Clerk will then read the short title of the Bill and the Speaker will ask "Second Reading what day?" Each Member names one of the Fridays allotted for Private Members' Bills by the Government.

17. Once a day has been chosen, a Member may postpone their second reading to a subsequent allotted day, but may not bring it forward to an earlier day. Crucially, a postponed bill goes to the bottom of the list on the new day, losing any special precedence gained from its ballot bill status.

### Further advice

18. The Clerk of Private Members' Bills can advise on the matters in this note and on the subsequent preparation of and proceedings on any Private Members' Bill and can be contacted on 020 7219 3254. The Public Bill Office is situated on the third floor, above the Chamber, and can be most easily reached via the lift by the Table Office or via the lifts off the southeast corner of Members' Lobby.

### Contacts

For further information please contact Farrah Bhatti, Clerk of Private Members' Bills: 020 7219 3254; [bhattif@parliament.uk](mailto:bhattif@parliament.uk)

**Media queries:** Alasdair Rendall, Media Relations Manager, 020 7219 0771.