

Summary of 4th Sitting Committee Stage: 14th November 2018

Chair: Laurence Robertson

Discussion resumed on Labour's proposal for EROs to prompt electors to register as overseas electors when moving abroad, which the Government considered unnecessary. It was immediately withdrawn.

Christian Matheson (Labour) then proposed an amendment requesting a report on the representation of overseas electors to examine how well electors are represented, what additional demands would be placed on MPs in relation to overseas electors, what consideration might be given to alternative models of representation such as overseas constituencies. He introduced this amendment as being motivated by his much repeated concerns over the lack of clarity over definitions of residence and where new voters would be able to register.

Chloe Smith (Conservative) argued that it was not for Government but for Parliament's code of conduct to deal with the responsibilities of its Members, and the amendment was withdrawn with no further debate.

Further proposals were then tabled by Labour relating to the problem identified by the Electoral Commission of 'double registration' (in more than one place) which could be tackled by creating a central register to prevent fraudulent registrations.

Alex Norris (Labour) said there was a risk of "creating a bit of a market in where people choose to vote, because they will choose to go where their vote might have the most impact". He recognised that a central register was not Labour Party policy but wanted to seek opinions on it.

Chloe Smith (Conservative) replied that the law already had provisions to fight against double voting, and that all overseas applicants would be required to prove their identity and establish a verifiable connection to an address in the UK before they could be added to the register: that address must be the last one at which they were registered or resident. However, Norris's question as to how an ERO would know if the address given was really their last address remained unanswered when the clause was withdrawn.

After only forty minutes of debate **Glyn Davies (Conservative)** closed the debate by proposing that the Chair report the Bill to the House. **Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Conservative)** reminded that Committee that it was he who had persuaded David Cameron to include Votes For Life in the 2015 party manifesto, and he who had persuaded Theresa May to include it in 2017. After a series of congratulatory speeches, the Chair announced that the Bill would be reported without amendment.