

SEANAD NEWSLETTER

Autumn/Winter 2014

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Welcome to the latest Newsletter from Senator Ivana Bacik.

I am delighted and honoured to represent the Dublin University constituency in Seanad Éireann. I will also make sure to keep you up to date with the work that I am doing in the Seanad, and would be happy to raise issues there on your behalf.

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Dear Graduate,

Welcome to my latest Newsletter from the Seanad.

This short newsletter provides you with an update on some of the work I have been doing over the past year in the Seanad. For a more detailed look at some of my work, you can find both video and transcript coverage on my website. I am very grateful for all the support I have received from Trinity graduates since my election in 2007, and re-election in 2011. Please do contact me if you would like me to raise any particular issue on your behalf in the Seanad.

I also organise regular tours of Leinster House and would be delighted to invite you to join us on one of those over the coming months.

Do get in touch on ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie and thanks for your support.

Best wishes,

Ivana



Amongst the public representatives and academics supporting the MND Ice Bucket Challenge, Front Square, Trinity College Dublin, August 2014. Photo: Ann Lane



Ivana with Justice Committee members at launch of report, 10 July 2014

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

In July 2014, I was proud to launch the report of the Joint Oireachtas Justice Committee on the heads of the Children and Family Relationships bill. This important bill will provide a comprehensive legal framework for the care and upbringing of children, and a proper legal structure to underpin diverse family relationships in Ireland. It will contain new provisions on a wide range of family life issues, including parentage; guardianship, custody and access; and child maintenance.



Email me to arrange a tour of the Seanad and Leinster House.

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MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLING

As former chairperson of the Portobello Educate Together school campaign, I was delighted that our school opened in September 2014 in a new premises in Dublin 8. This was the culmination of a four-year campaign by local parents to ensure greater provision of multi-denominational primary school places in our area. Now that we have achieved this great result, we will be campaigning for the establishment of a multi-denominational school at secondary level in Dublin city centre!

For more see www.portbelloetns.org and www.educatetogether.ie

MARRIAGE EQUALITY REFERENDUM

I am delighted that the Government has announced that a referendum on marriage equality will be held in Spring 2015. This is a vitally important civil liberties issue. The legalisation of civil partnerships was a significant step towards equality, but full equality is only possible when all couples, whether gay or straight, have the right to marry.

To keep updated on the marriage equality campaign, see www.marriageequality.ie or www.lgbtnoise.ie

Make sure you are registered to vote!
www.checktheregister.ie

VISIT OF FORMER SENATOR CATHERINE MCGUINNESS



Ivana with members of the Seanad and visiting speaker Ms Justice Catherine McGuinness, former Senator and Supreme Court Judge, June 2014.

I was pleased to welcome Catherine McGuinness to the Seanad as a former Senator and distinguished speaker. She spoke on the topic of Children's Rights in Ireland in June 2014. Her address focused on access to education for children, the rights of children in direct provision, and historical revelations of institutional abuse, including the treatment of children in mother and baby homes.

OIREACHTAS WOMEN CELEBRATION IN LEINSTER HOUSE



A framed picture is now on permanent display in Leinster House of the 'Oireachtas Women' event I organised in 2008 to mark the 90th anniversary of the first election in which women could vote in Ireland. In January 2014, I invited all current women TDs and Senators to the Seanad Chamber for the taking of another photo to celebrate the contribution women members have made to the Oireachtas.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

As leader of the Labour delegation to the Constitutional Convention, which took place in 2012-2014, I was delighted to see strong Convention support for the inclusion of Economic, Social and Cultural rights in the Constitution. Other highlights included the 79% majority in favour of marriage equality, and strong majorities in favour of extending voting rights to those aged 16-17; and to support removal of the constitutional blasphemy offence. A Referendum is due on some of these issues in 2015.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' LEGISLATION

In the last two years, two of my private members' bills have been accepted by government. The first is the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 which for the first time legalises the solemnisation of civil weddings by Humanists – until now only State Registrars or members of religious bodies could legally solemnise marriage.

The second is the Employment (Equality) (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2013, which is going to Committee Stage in the Seanad and is expected to be passed soon. This will amend section 37 of the Employment Equality Act and prohibit discrimination against LGBT teachers or hospital workers. It has been welcomed by teachers' unions and LGBT groups.

SEANAD NEWS

Child Marriage Motion, 25 June 2014: I proposed a Seanad motion, seconded by Sen. Jillian Van Turnhout, calling on the Government to remove the statutory provision which allows minors to marry on the basis of a court exemption. Section 31 of the Family Law Act 1995 provides that the minimum legal age at which people can marry in Ireland is 18. However, section 33 allows a couple to apply to the court for an exemption from this rule where one or both are aged under 18 – this exemption is too broadly drawn and may facilitate forced marriages.

Seanad Reform: I have spoken extensively on the need for Seanad reform over the years. In particular, I support the introduction of legislative change, to provide for expansion of the electorate for the University panels to include other third-level institutions; and reform of the Seanad vocational panel electoral process to give citizens a real voice in who is elected.

Hate Crime Report: In September 2014 I was delighted to launch an important report on hate crime, 'A Life Free From Fear - Legislating for Hate Crime in Ireland: An NGO Perspective' authored by University of Limerick academics Dr Amanda Haynes, Jennifer Schweppe (School of Law) and Dr James Carr (Department of Sociology) as pictured below. I am now actively seeking to have laws introduced to make hate crime an offence.



LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP

As a long-time supporter of Joan Burton TD, I supported her candidacy and was delighted when she was elected as the first woman leader of the Labour Party in July 2014, replacing Eamon Gilmore as party leader and Tánaiste. She brings great ability, energy and vision to government, and I am proud to be working with her.

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