



SEANAD NEWSLETTER

Summer/Autumn 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 recent work I have been doing over the past year. 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,

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 statutory 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 law issues, including parentage; assisted human reproduction and surrogacy; guardianship, custody and access; and child maintenance.



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



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

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MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLING

As founding chairperson of the Portobello Educate Together school campaign, I was delighted that our new school opened in September 2013 in Dublin 8.

This was the culmination of a three-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.portobelloetns.org and <http://www.educatetogether.ie>

MARRIAGE EQUALITY REFERENDUM

I welcome the Government announcement 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 I have always campaigned for full equality – so that 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

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 delighted to welcome Catherine McGuinness to the Seanad as a former Senator and distinguished speaker. Her address on the topic of Children's Rights focused on access to education, 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



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. On 28 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 between December 2012 – March 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; strong majorities in favour of extending voting rights to those aged 16-17; and support for removal of the constitutional blasphemy offence.

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 pass soon. This will amend section 37 of the Employment Equality Act and prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexuality against teachers or hospital workers. It has been welcomed by teachers' unions and LGBT groups.

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Child Marriage Motion, 25 June 2014: I proposed a Seanad motion, seconded by Sen. Jillian Van Turnhout, calling on the government to outlaw child marriage. 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 – but the government accepted our argument that this exemption is too broad and may lead to forced marriages. Legal change will come about as a result of our motion.

750th Anniversary of First Parliament in Ireland: On 18 June 2014, at my initiative, the Seanad marked the 750th anniversary of the first documented parliament in Ireland, which met in Castledermot, Co. Kildare in 1264. This historic anniversary was brought to my attention by TCD lecturer Paul Horan, and many Trinity colleagues were present for the debate.



Ivana with Trinity colleagues for 750th anniversary debate, 18 June 2014

Seanad Reform: I have spoken extensively on the need for Seanad reform over the years, and welcomed the outcome of the Seanad referendum in October 2013. 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.

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, replacing Eamon Gilmore as party leader and Tánaiste. I know that she will bring great ability, energy and vision to government, and I look forward to working with her.

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Labour