

SEANAD NEWSLETTER

Summer/Autumn 2015

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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 my work, you can find full coverage on my website (including videos and written transcripts of my contributions in the Seanad). 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, 

REPEAL OF THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT

In November 2014, I announced the establishment of a Labour Women Commission on Repeal of the Eighth Amendment, to work on drafting legislation to replace the Eighth Amendment, assisted by a panel of independent legal and medical experts including former Senator Mary Henry (our Chairperson) and Drs Peter Boylan and Veronica O'Keane. I was Rapporteur to the Commission. On 27th February 2015, Labour Party members voted unanimously to endorse the Commission's Report and to support repeal of the Amendment, and its replacement with legislation allowing abortion on grounds of risk to life or health; rape; and fatal foetal abnormality. Labour Women are now preparing this draft legislation.

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 legalised the solemnisation of civil weddings by Humanists – until it passed, only State Registrars or members of religious bodies could legally solemnise marriage.



Joanna Tuffy, TD, Mirza and Bronagh Catibusic, Senator Mary Moran, Ivana and Jan O'Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills, Leinster House, July 2015 event to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide.

The second is the Employment (Equality) (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2013, which has been passed through the Seanad as of July 2015. This Bill amends section 37 of the Employment Equality Act and prohibits discrimination against LGBT teachers or hospital workers. It has been welcomed by teachers' unions and LGBT groups and its final passage through the Dail will add to the great equality successes we have been celebrating this year.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY REFERENDUM 2015



Out on the canvass, Portobello and Declaration celebrations, Irish Times, May 24th



On 22nd May 2015 history was made, as Ireland became the first country in the world to decide by popular vote to extend full civil marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples.

In the marriage equality campaign, we witnessed a great surge in levels of activism and participation, with record numbers of younger voters in particular becoming registered, and with the great success of the #Hometovote movement in getting Irish citizens to travel from many countries to get back for canvassing and voting.

I was very proud to have been actively involved in the marriage equality campaign over many years; indeed ten years ago I had acted as junior counsel in the legal case taken by Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan seeking equal rights to marry for same-sex couples – a case which paved the way for the referendum to take place.

Congratulations to all those who were involved with the lead campaign organisation 'Yes Equality', and to all the groups and individuals who got involved in securing this tremendous referendum victory. The results were extraordinary – the national Yes vote was 62%, with most Dublin constituencies voting Yes at levels of 70% or higher. A truly wonderful result for equality.



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

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INCREASED NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS



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. I have spoken on the need to increase the numbers of women in politics, and in support of our new 'gender quota' legislation, at numerous conferences, including a North-South conference in EU Parliament House, Dublin, on 6th July 2015.



Ivana with fellow speakers and attendees at the IBIS annual conference, Women in Leadership North and South, European Parliament Office Dublin, July 2015

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. And I'm delighted to see some of the recommendations being adopted.

MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLING

Canal Way Educate Together National School, Dublin 8

I was a founding member and Chairperson of the campaign for a new multi-denominational school in Dublin 8 (the Portobello school campaign); and was delighted when, after spending a year in temporary premises 2013-4 in Harcourt Terrace, the school moved in September 2014 to permanent premises in the former Christian Brothers school on Basin Lane, Rialto, Dublin 8. The school is now called Canal Way Educate Together. On 17th January 2015 a group of us organised a family tea party in the school, which was a great success. See <http://www.portobelloetns.org/> for more details.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

After many hours of debate, we finally passed the Children and Family Relationships bill in the Seanad in March 2015. This important progressive bill provides a comprehensive statutory framework for the care and upbringing of children, and a proper legal structure to underpin diverse family relationships in Ireland – including gay families. It contains new provisions on a wide range of family law issues, including parentage; assisted human reproduction; guardianship, custody and access.

SEANAD REFORM – 'CHECK THE REGISTER'

I have contributed extensively to the ongoing debate on Seanad reform, in particular during Seanad debates on the topic on 5th May and 8th July 2015. I have called for the introduction of wide-ranging reforms of the Seanad, and made constructive proposals based upon the 2015 Report of the Working Group on Seanad Reform. I have also recommended that the existing registers of voters on the University Seanad panels - the registers kept by the NUI and by Dublin University- should be accessible online by graduates, in the same way that the General Election register is accessible online at www.checktheregister.ie. I am working to ensure that this becomes reality for our voters before the next Seanad election.

SEANAD NEWS

The last term has seen an extensive array of legislation passing through both Dail and Seanad. The bills that I led on or contributed to recently include: the Children and Family Relationships Bill; the 34th Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Bill; the Gender Recognition Bill; the Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill; the Workplace Relations Bill; the Garda Síochána (Amendment)(No 3) Bill; the Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) bill, the Health Insurance Amendment bill, and the Finance bill. On 1st April 2015, I proposed a motion on integration and new communities in the Seanad during Private Members time, which was taken by Minister Aodhán Ó Riordáin – we had representatives from the Polish community and the organisers of the inaugural PolskaEire festival present for this lively and engaging debate.



Ivana with Minister Aodhán Ó Riordáin and Polska Éire organisers, 1st April 2015.

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