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Subject Submission

1. Senate is seen as undemocratic for a number of reasons. The panels from which the vast majority of senators are elected are through this process. Over the history of the Seanad, there have been almost no independent senators elected through the panels.

This method of nominating and electing senators needs to be opened up to the general population. The election by councillors, existing senators and dail deputies is one that the vast majority of people have no input, and therefore, have little interest in the result.

2. The Taoiseach's nominees should be eliminated, and replaced with individuals of particular standing in various parts of society, e.g. The Arts, Sport, Education, Industry etc. These Senators could be selected by an independent panel, in order to eliminate any perception of bias. Some or all of these nominees could be taken from the council of state, if practicable.

3. The elitism of the University Panels should be eliminated. The fact that one must be a graduate of either the NUI or TCD to have a vote is unreasonable. Even the extension of voting rights to all third level graduates would be anti democratic. This goes back to point 1, in that the voting for the senate should be extended to all citizens.

4. The date of the election should coincide with the General Election to prevent the perception of the Senate becoming a holding pen for failed Dail candidates. The panels of candidates for the election could be selected on a regional basis, possibly on a scaled down version of the European Parliament Elections, to ensure a geographical spread, and to prevent a very cumbersome list of candidates on the ballot paper.

5. A clear definition of the role of the Senate for the citizens who will elect them. Significantly more bills should be originating in the Seanad, particularly ones that have sectoral impact. The Construction Contracts Act comes to mind as an example of how the Senate could work.

Kind Regards,

Marie Casserly,
Independent Councillor
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