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cc

Subject Seanad Reform Suggestion

In terms of Seanad Reform I would like to suggest two specific points, which are all possible with a little bit of creativity in terms of legislation. (However I would also suggest that I'm sure the public would be fine with a referendum on a new Seanad however much one thinks the electorate are inclined to refuse government initiatives, there is also a history of referendums passing overwhelmingly in the past)

- A 1-2 year term would enable non-politicians to take a secondment from their chosen career, anything longer means that the only viable candidates are those who wish to be a politician. A four-year absence from one's job is unrealistic if a prospective member of the Seanad is expected to be an expert in his or her fields. As such election of senators would need to be conducted by representative professional, regulatory or other bodies ranging from the medical council, the chartered accountants of Ireland etc. Any organisation can be a nominating body and the nominating bodies are elected by the councillors (rather than the councillors electing the individuals directly themselves). Furthermore one could stipulate that members of the Seanad are no longer allowed to be members of political parties.
- In terms of oversight they should obviously continue to be allowed to scrutinise legislation and have the ability to directly veto decision which involve the allocation of funds in excess of 15 per cent of the most recent estimate of the country's GNP. This therefore ensures greater scrutiny over decisions such as the budget, the privatisation of state bodies and major investment works.

Yours,

Kevin Cunningham