



Establishment of the Electoral Reform Working Group

Presented by:

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Mr Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the establishment of the Electoral Reform Working Group, an important step in advancing the Government's Comprehensive Electoral Reform Programme.

Mr Speaker, over the past several months, the Government has undertaken extensive public engagement, consultation, research, and policy development on a broad range of electoral reform matters. Through town hall meetings, stakeholder discussions, youth engagement sessions, written submissions, feedback from overseas Bermudians, candidate surveys, and operational reviews, valuable perspectives have been gathered from across our community.

The Government has consistently maintained that electoral reform must strengthen our democracy, improve public confidence in the electoral process, and ensure that our electoral system remains fair, accessible, secure, and fit for purpose.

As Honourable Members will be aware, the establishment of the Working Group represents the next step in this process, following the completion of extensive consultation, research, and policy development.

Today, I can confirm that the Electoral Reform Working Group has now been formally established.

Mr Speaker, the Working Group has been created to provide independent review and practical scrutiny of the Government's electoral reform proposals before legislative drafting is finalised. Its role is to assess the evidence gathered to date, review policy proposals, identify risks and safeguards, and provide recommendations to support the next phase of reform.

Its work will focus on four key areas:

- Voter Access and Registration
- Election Day Processes and Administration
- Campaign and Election Finance
- Governance and Oversight.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Senator Lauren Bell JP will serve as Chair of the Electoral Reform Working Group and Ms. McKenzie Tuckett will serve as Deputy Chair.

The full membership of the Working Group is as follows:

- Senator Lauren Bell JP, Chair
- Ms. McKenzie Tuckett, Deputy Chair
- Ms. Juanae Crockwell
- Mr. Theo Wolffe
- Mr. Max Blakeney
- Mr. Trew Morris
- Ms. Tenia K. Woolridge (Parliamentary Registrar)
- Ms. Jahdia Spencer
- Mr. Geoffrey Faiella
- Mr. Michael Anthony Charles Smith
- Dr. Lana Talbot

Mr Speaker, these individuals have been selected not only for the experience and expertise they bring, but also because, collectively, they represent a broad cross-section of Bermuda's community.

The Government was deliberate in seeking a Working Group that reflects a range of professional backgrounds, generations, perspectives, and lived experiences.

Mr Speaker, that balance is intentional, because electoral reform affects every Bermudian and must reflect that range of experience.

Members have not been appointed to advocate for any political party, organisation, or special interest.

Rather, they have been appointed to apply their judgement, experience, and constructive scrutiny to the proposals before them and to help ensure that any reforms ultimately brought before Parliament are practical, effective, and capable of commanding public confidence.

The Working Group will receive consultation findings, policy papers, operational assessments, comparative research, and other supporting materials.

Particular attention will be given to issues including absentee voting for overseas students, campaign finance regulation, voter registration, Election Day administration, and options for strengthening electoral governance, including consideration of a future Electoral Commission.

Mr Speaker, the issue of absentee voting emerged as one of the most frequently raised electoral matters during and following the last General Election.

Concerns were expressed by Bermudians studying overseas who wished to participate in the democratic process but faced barriers to doing so.

The Government has listened carefully to those concerns, and the Working Group will examine practical and secure options to improve voter access while preserving the integrity and public confidence that are fundamental to our electoral system.

Mr Speaker, I have already met with members of the Working Group as part of an initial orientation session, where the timeline and expectations for this work were discussed in detail.

There is a clear understanding among members that this review must proceed with focus, discipline, and urgency.

Mr Speaker, the Group has been established as an accelerated review exercise and is expected to complete its work within four weeks, with provision for a short extension if required.

This phase is not about restarting consultation. It is about testing, refining, and finalising the direction of reform based on the work already completed.

Upon completion, it will submit a recommendations report to support Cabinet consideration and legislative drafting.

Mr Speaker, This Government has been clear that electoral reform should be guided by evidence, informed by practical experience, and tailored to Bermuda's unique circumstances. The establishment of this Working Group reflects that commitment.

I would like to thank Senator Bell, Ms. Tuckett, and all members of the Working Group for their willingness to serve. Their contribution will play an important role as we continue the work of strengthening Bermuda's democratic institutions.

Mr Speaker, I remain committed to bringing the necessary electoral reform legislation before this Honourable House in September 2026, and I look forward to receiving the Working Group's recommendations in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker.**