



The Rt Hon Lucy Powell MP
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Cat Smith MP
Chair of the Procedure Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: LP/NMP336
19th November 2024

Dear Cat,

REVIEW OF PROXY VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

Thank you for your letter of the 7th November confirming that your committee will look to undertake a review of the operation of existing proxy voting arrangements.

In addition to the temporary changes made regarding proxy votes for those suffering from long-term or serious illness, the Government has been made aware of some circumstances that are not adequately captured within the scope of existing arrangements, specifically in relation to fertility treatment and complications related to pregnancy. With that in mind, I intend to bring forward a motion to provide for proxy votes under these circumstances. I have enclosed a copy of the motion for your information.

Alongside this change, the Government believes that the guidance for the scheme should be amended to allow all proxy votes to automatically be held for seven months, putting all aspects of the scheme on the same footing. The length of a proxy vote would remain subject to extension by discussion with the Speaker, and Members would be able to bring their proxy to an end if it is no longer required. I am writing in similar terms to Mr Speaker to ask that the relevant changes to the guidance are made.

We believe this is an opportunity to make a progressive change to the procedures of the House, with the aim of ensuring that those who require extended leave for fertility treatment and complications related to pregnancy can apply for a proxy vote. However, we recognise that this is not necessarily a conclusive solution and we would therefore welcome your Committee's views on the operation of this change as part of a wider review of the overall scheme.

I look forward to working with you and your Committee further on this important matter. I am copying this letter to the Chief Whip and the Shadow Leader of the House.

Yours,
Henry

Motion

PROXY VOTING

Lucy Powell

That the following change be made to Standing Order No. 39A(2)(c): leave out subparagraph 2(c) and insert:

“(c) complications related to childbirth or pregnancy, miscarriage, baby loss or extended absence for fertility treatment; and”