

Written evidence from Involve (TEB 43)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee The Elections Bill inquiry

We are calling on the UK Government to pause and rethink the Elections Bill.

At [Involve](#), we develop, support and campaign for people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. Since 2003, we have worked with governments, parliaments, civil society, academics and the public to improve decision-making and re-vitalise democracy.

Free and fair elections are a vital part of a healthy democracy; people's voices are heard by those in power and those in power respond. In recent years, this principle appears to be on shaky ground. Whether it is growing political disengagement, the influx of US-style big money to our elections, foreign influence from adversaries, or shadowy third-party groups, the threat to free and fair elections has never been greater.

We need action to protect our democracy. Instead, the government has brought forward a bill that fails to tackle the big problems and threatens to make things worse.

Rather than deepening the involvement of people across the country, we believe the UK government's Elections Bill will damage democracy.

The bill fails to:

- Take steps to improve political engagement or encourage higher participation in our elections
- Implement any of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report on election finance. The committee chair, Lord Evans, has warned that failure to implement the proposals before the next election could put integrity and trust in our system at risk.
- Tackle problems created by big money donations, that often mean "cash for access"

Instead, the bill seeks to:

- Spend up to £180million over ten years introducing mandatory photo ID that could disenfranchise millions of voters
- Remove powers from and abolish the independence of the elections' watchdog that polices our elections
- Gives Ministers fresh powers to restrict the activities of charities and campaign groups

Fundamentally, it is a bill that will concentrate power in the hands of a small number of individuals and further disempower the ordinary voter.

We believe that the Government must pause and rethink this bill.

We need an Elections Bill that will strengthen our democracy and deliver on the promise that in a democracy, all voices are equal.

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