

Written evidence submitted by 38 Degrees (PMB 19)

100,953 members of 38 Degrees have so far signed the petition to 'Stop filibustering in the House of Commons'.

We have attached the petition as evidence to the Procedure Committee.

The petition continues to grow and can be found here:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-filibustering-in-the-house-of-commons>

In addition, a short survey was emailed to supporters of the petition. 18,851 38 Degrees members took part in the survey. Below is a summary of the results:

- **The vast majority (95%) think that individual MPs being able to introduce new laws through Private Members Bills is a good thing**, with 83% believing it to be very important.
- **When asked how filibustering made them feel about democracy in the UK, 52% said it makes them feel frustrated**, 32% said it makes them feel disappointed, while 13% stated it makes them feel embarrassed.
- **When asked why they believe filibustering is bad, 56% said that the tactic is not democratic as it puts too much power in the hands of just a few MPs.** 35% said filibustering stops laws getting the debate they deserve, while 7% believe filibustering wastes parliamentary time.

When asked if there was anything else they would like to submit as evidence the Procedure Committee, **over 9,000 38 Degrees members provided individual comments.** It's an incredible response and shows the strength of feeling against filibustering. All of the comments can be found in the attached spreadsheet.

An overwhelming theme present in many of the comments is that **filibustering undermines our democratic values.**

38 Degrees member Sharon said:

When the members of our government spend their time on tactics to inhibit fair debate or devising strategies simply to make their option 'seem' like the only choice by circumstance - then democracy has died.

John commented:

Filibustering is the antithesis of parliamentary democracy. Artificially blocking proper discussion in parliament is just plain wrong. Votes should determine the fate of Bills not time wasting.

38 Degrees member Jim said:

It makes our democracy a sham.

Many 38 Degrees members said that **filibustering is a waste of parliamentary time.**

Simon said:

It is a complete and total waste of time. Nobody is saying all of these laws should not proceed, but, that's why there is voting - if there are issues with enough people being able to

attend all sessions, then why not update the voting system so that MPs can vote remotely, electronically or by proxy. Having people stand up and talk nonsense for hours on end is a waste of parliamentary time and does not allow laws to get the proper debate they require. It's an infantile school yard tactic that is completely disrespectful and has no place in a modern inclusive democracy.

Another 38 Degrees member Annamaria commented:

I feel frustrated and ashamed to witness elected MPs behaving in this manner - deliberately wasting time with the sole intention of preventing debate. We wouldn't allow these dirty tricks in football, but allow it in parliament. It really makes my blood boil when I see it happening or read about it, irrespective of the topic of the bill or who is proposing it.

Lots of 38 Degrees members said that **voting on new laws should be compulsory.**

Anna said:

I think it would be a good idea to make voting on new laws compulsory and to vote by a certain deadline. A definite conclusion about a matter should be reached after a certain amount of time.

Diane commented:

Voting on new laws should be compulsory, so that they cannot be deliberately killed off by MPs over talking in order to run out of time for a proper debate

Others suggested imposing **time limits on speeches to stop filibustering:**

David said:

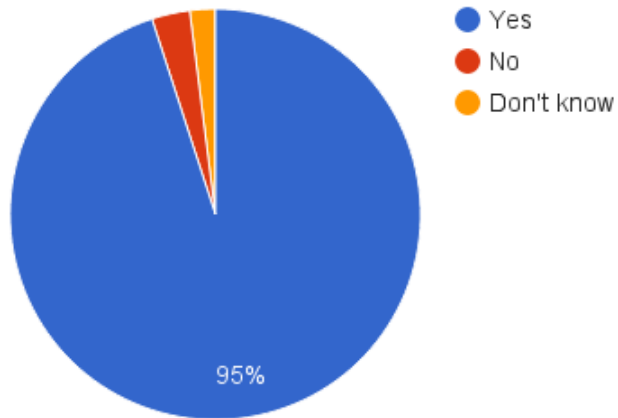
Impose time limits on individual speeches.

38 Degrees member Mary suggested:

Time limits on all parliamentary speeches whether Private Members Bills or not. Listening in to what is said nearly always the impression that the kernel of an argument is usually effectively put within 5 - 10 minutes.

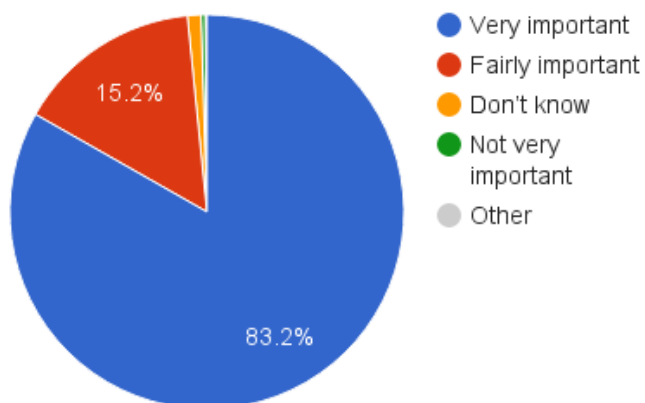
Survey results

1. Filibustering usually happens to Private Members Bills - which are new laws being proposed by MPs who are not government ministers. Do you think it's good thing that individual MPs have a chance to introduce new laws, even if they're not a member of the political party that's in government?



(Total respondents: 18,840)

2) If yes, how important do you think it is?



(Total respondents: 18,312)

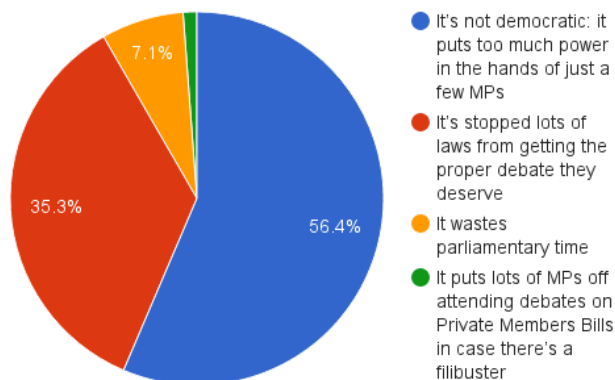
3) When you hear that a new law has been filibustered, how does it make you feel about democracy in the UK?

Embarrassed Frustrated Disappointed

1. Frustrated (52%)
2. Disappointed (32%)
3. Embarrassed (13%)
4. Don't know (> 1%)
5. Good, it's a useful way of blocking laws that shouldn't be passed (> 1%)
6. Fine, it's not a perfect system but it works (> 1%)

(Total respondents: 18,843)

4) If you think that the tactic of filibustering is bad, why?



(Total respondents: 18,760)

April 2016