



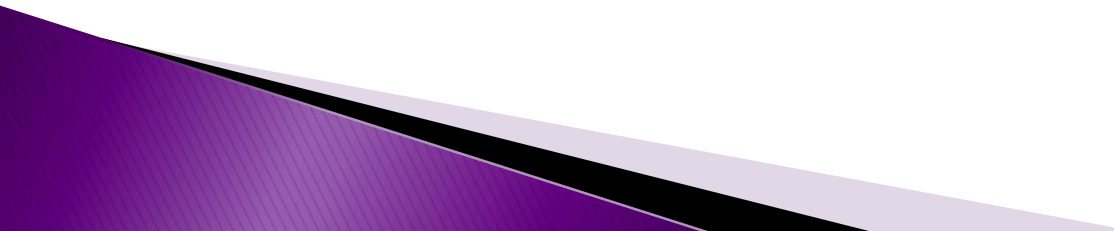
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
OUTREACH SERVICE



The UK Parliament and Northern Ireland: legislation and committees

October 2012

Overview

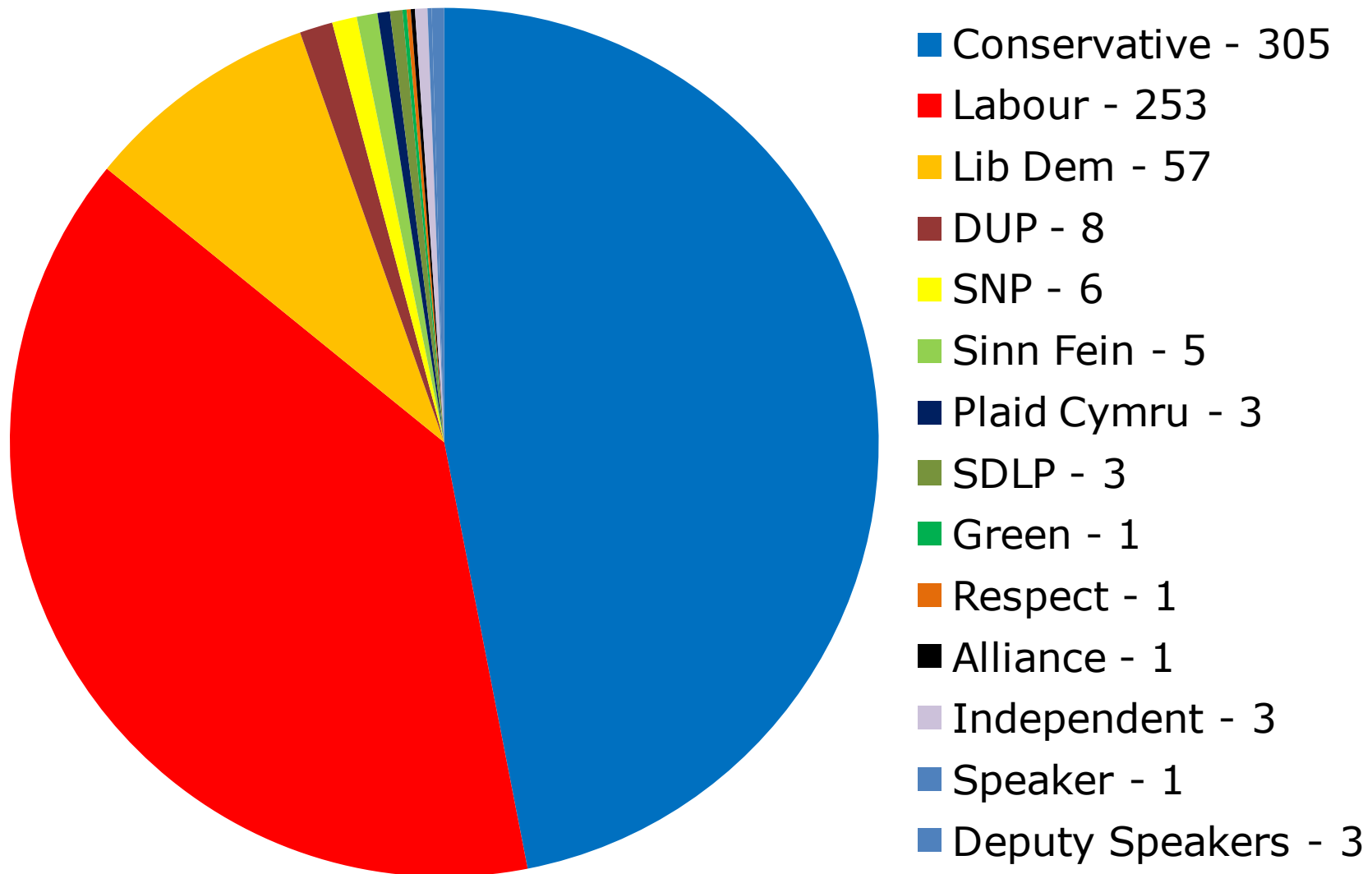
- ▶ This session will cover:
 - ▶ Powers of the UK Parliament in relation to Northern Ireland
 - ▶ Parliamentary scrutiny
 - ▶ The Committee system
 - ▶ Primary and secondary legislation
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Parliamentary Outreach

- ▶ A service from the Houses of Parliament
- ▶ Politically neutral
- ▶ Aim is to increase knowledge and engagement with work and processes of Parliament
- ▶ **Not** an alternative to MPs



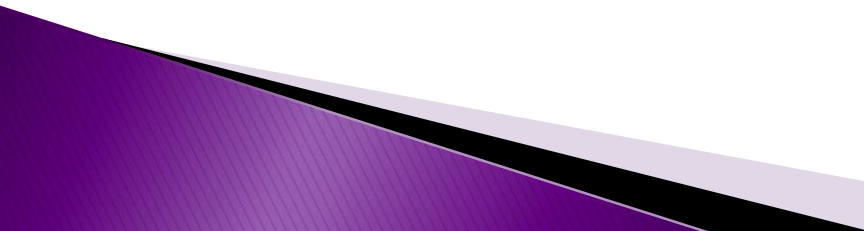
State of the Parties 2012



Excepted matters

Set out in schedule 2 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

Some of the key areas:

- ▶ The Crown
 - ▶ Parliamentary elections, and Assembly elections
 - ▶ Nationality, immigration and asylum
 - ▶ International relations
 - ▶ Defence
 - ▶ National taxation
 - ▶ Appointment and removal of judges
 - ▶ Registration of political parties
 - ▶ National security
 - ▶ Nuclear energy
- 

Reserved matters

Set out in schedule 3 of Northern Ireland Act 1998

Some of the key areas:

- ▶ Some policing and justice matters - notably parades, SOCA and drug classification
- ▶ Civil aviation
- ▶ Navigation
- ▶ The Post Office
- ▶ Disqualification from membership of the Assembly
- ▶ Emergency powers
- ▶ Civil defence
- ▶ Consumer protection
- ▶ Telecommunications
- ▶ Intellectual property

The Belfast agreement envisages that all reserved matters will ultimately be transferred to the Assembly



Scrutiny in the UK Parliament

UK Parliament Committees

- ▶ **Select committees:** both Houses establish select committees to conduct inquiries and to produce reports on a range of matters, from the conduct of Government to specialist subject areas.
- ▶ **Legislative committees:** both Houses refer legislation to committees for detailed discussion and approval. These committees are part of the process of making laws and include public bill committees, delegated legislation committees and committees on private bills (these fall under the heading of general committees on the parliamentary calendar).
- ▶ **Other committees:** established by statute of either House, with a range of specific functions. These largely deal with internal matters, but external ones exist, such as the Arms Export Controls Committee.

Select Committees

- ▶ In the Commons, set up to scrutinise work of government departments
- ▶ In the Lords, have cross-cutting role
- ▶ There are joint Committees, e.g. on human rights, or on statutory instruments
- ▶ Work of Committees often carried out through public inquiries
- ▶ Groups and individuals submit evidence to enquiries
- ▶ Inquiry report created and usually passed to relevant government department



Select Committees

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Commons Select Committee



Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Committee news



Committee to take evidence on an air strategy for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee holds first evidence session on new inquiry



Committee to inquire into an air transport strategy for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee announces new inquiry



Committee "bitterly disappointed" at lack of progress on new measures to tackle fuel fraud crimes
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee publishes report on fuel laundering and smuggling

■ [All Northern Ireland Affairs Committee News](#)

What's on

Related information

What do Select Committees do?

Much of the work of the House of Commons and the House of Lords takes place in committees, which examine issues in detail, from government policy to proposed new laws.

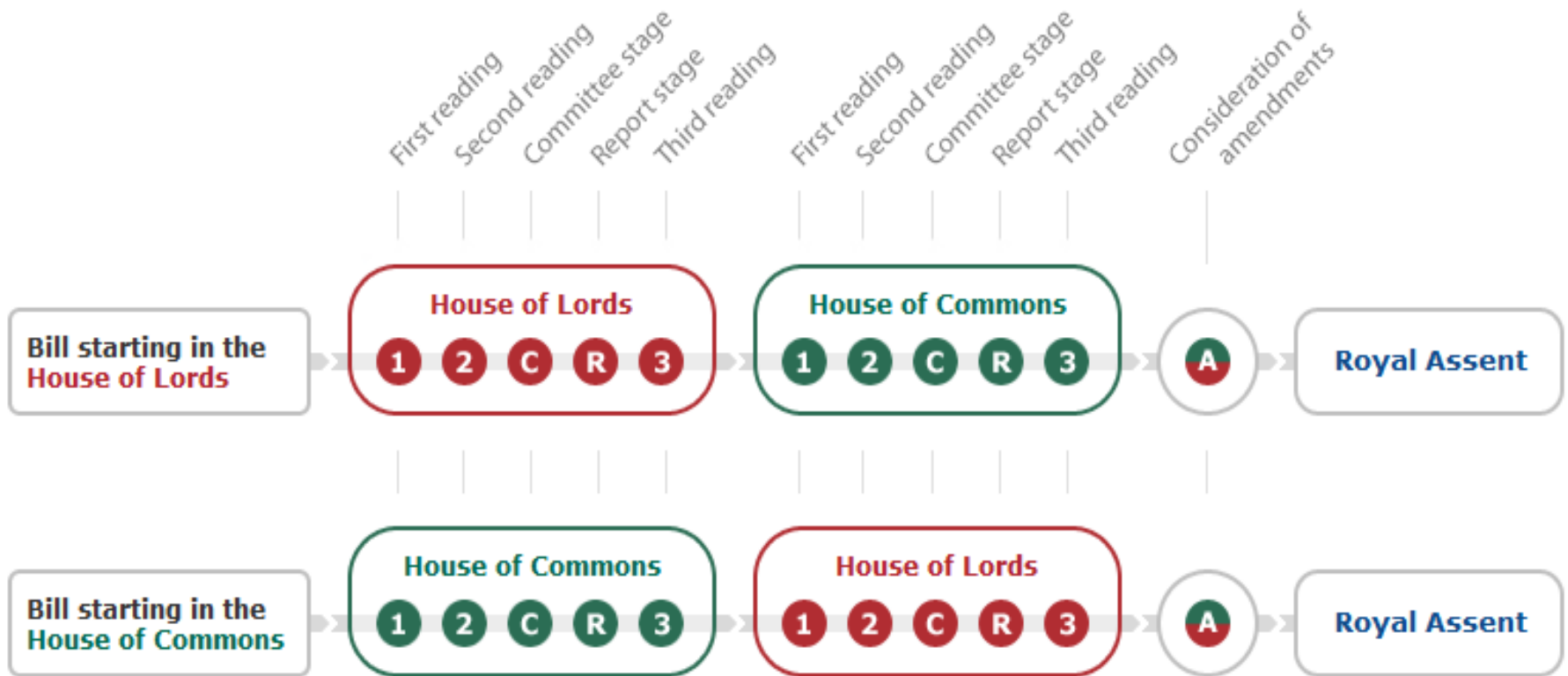
- [Select Committees](#)
- [Joint Committees](#)
- [General Committees](#)
- [Grand Committees](#)

Guide for witnesses


Detailed guidance for individuals and organisations giving written or oral evidence to House of Commons Select Committees.

- [Commons: guide for witnesses](#)

Passage of a Bill



Public Bill Committees

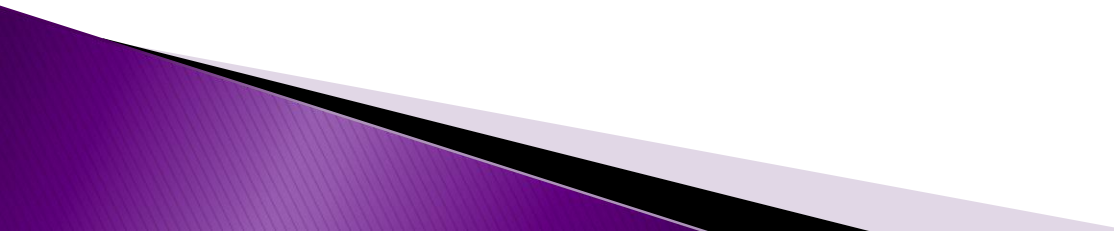
- ▶ Appointed for each public Bill that goes through Parliament
 - ▶ Take written and oral evidence from experts outside Parliament (unless Bill began life in the House of Lords)
 - ▶ Examine Bills clause by clause
 - ▶ Members of the Committee chosen by party Whips
 - ▶ Members can ask for changes by tabling amendments
 - ▶ Report findings to the main Chamber
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Influencing and changing Legislation

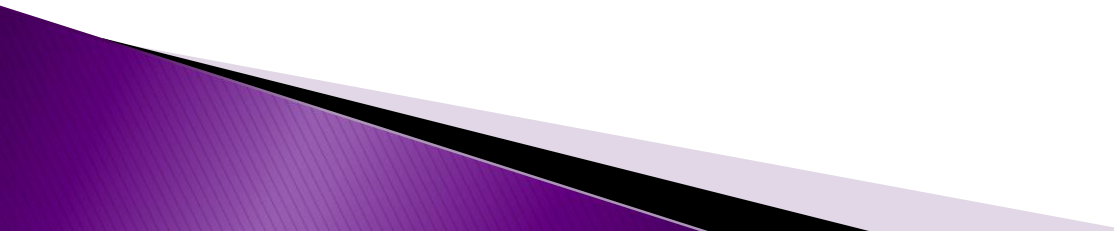
- ▶ Draft legislation may emerge from Green Papers or White Papers (issued by Government before Bill comes to HoP)
- ▶ Draft Bills may be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by Select Committees
- ▶ Public Bill Committees often include a public evidence stage
- ▶ MPs and Members of the House of Lords

“No one shall carry any dangerous weapon upon the public highway, except for the purposes of killing a noxious animal or a policeman in the execution of his duty” – for more, see <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/parliamentarycounsel.aspx>

Legislation

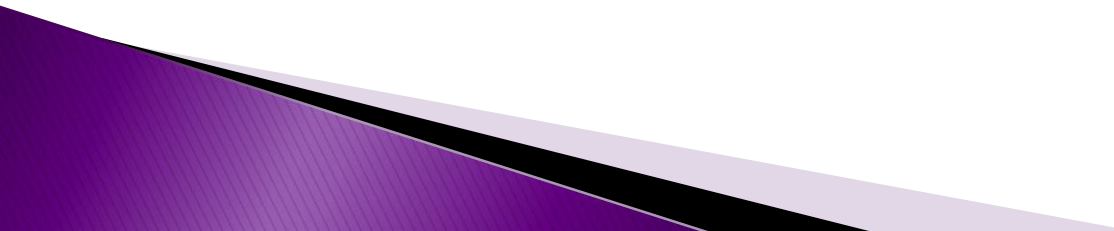
- ▶ All primary legislation proposed by the Government must be scrutinised by both Houses of Parliament
 - ▶ Each Bill goes through the same stages in each House - First Reading, Second Reading, Committee, Report, Third Reading – before it reaches Royal Assent
 - ▶ Members can suggest changes (“amendments”) at particular stages
 - ▶ Much of the most careful scrutiny goes on in Committee, particularly in the House of Lords
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Secondary legislation

- ▶ Secondary (or delegated) legislation allows the Government to make changes to the law using powers conferred by an Act of Parliament.
 - ▶ Statutory instruments form the majority of delegated legislation.
 - ▶ Acts often contain a broad framework and statutory instruments are used to provide the detail that would be too complex to include in the Act itself.
 - ▶ Statutory instruments can also be used to amend, update or enforce existing primary legislation.
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Statutory instruments

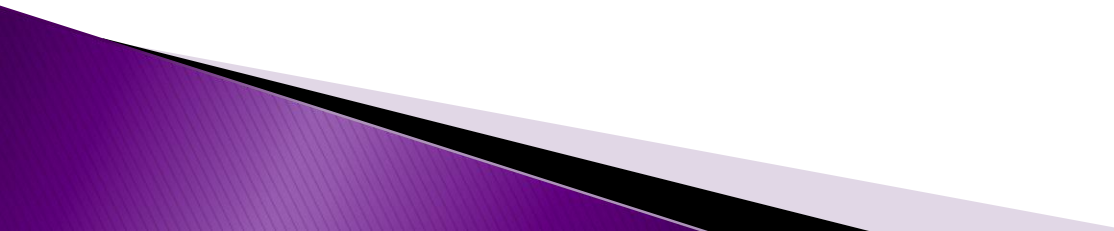
There are two types of statutory instrument:

- ▶ Affirmative instruments: Both Houses of Parliament must expressly approve them
 - ▶ Negative instruments: become law without a debate or a vote but may be annulled by a resolution of either House of Parliament
 - ▶ In both cases, Parliament's room for manoeuvre is limited. Parliament can accept or reject an SI but cannot amend it.
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Questions?



Where can I get information?

- ▶ www.parliament.uk
 - ▶ 020 7219 4272 – Commons information
 - ▶ 020 7219 3107 – Lords information
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Where can I get information?

- ▶ Scrutiny Unit – 020 7219 8381;
scrutiny@parliament.uk
 - ▶ Select Committees – contact details are on the Committees own homepage at www.parliament.uk
 - ▶ Contact details for any MP or Peer can be obtained at the Parliament homepage or through the House information lines
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