



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

---

Paper 66/13

2 May 2013

NIAR 303-13

**Ray McCaffrey**

# Additional information on Petitions of Concern

## 1 Introduction

This briefing provides further information on Petitions of Concern. The Assembly and Executive Review Committee requested this information at its meeting on 23 April 2013. The information is presented in a series of tables.

## 2 Petitions of Concern

The following table shows the numbers of Petitions of Concern by session and by community designation. Two Petitions submitted have been joint Unionist/Nationalist.

**Table 1: Petitions of Concern submitted by community designation from 1998 to 2013**

Session	Unionist	Nationalist	Joint Unionist/Nationalist
1998-99	0	0	0
1999-00	0	1	0
2000-01	0	2	0
2001-02	1	1	1 (Election of First Minister and Deputy First Minister)
2002-03	1	0	0
	Suspension October 2002 – May 2007 <sup>1</sup>		
2003-04			
2004-05			
2005-06			
2006-07			
2007-08	0	6	0
2008-09	2	1	1 (Civic Forum)
2009-10	1	2	0
2010-11	17	3	0
2011-12	4	1	0
2012-13 <sup>2</sup>	3	8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> At times during the period of suspension the Assembly operated in 'shadow' form in preparation for a return to devolved government.

<sup>2</sup> Up to and including 30 April 2013

There is a fairly even split between Petitions submitted in respect of motions and legislation. However, it should be noted that almost half of petitions submitted against legislation relate to the Caravans Bill and the Justice Bill where Petitions have been submitted in respect of various amendments to these Bills.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Petitions of Concern by type**

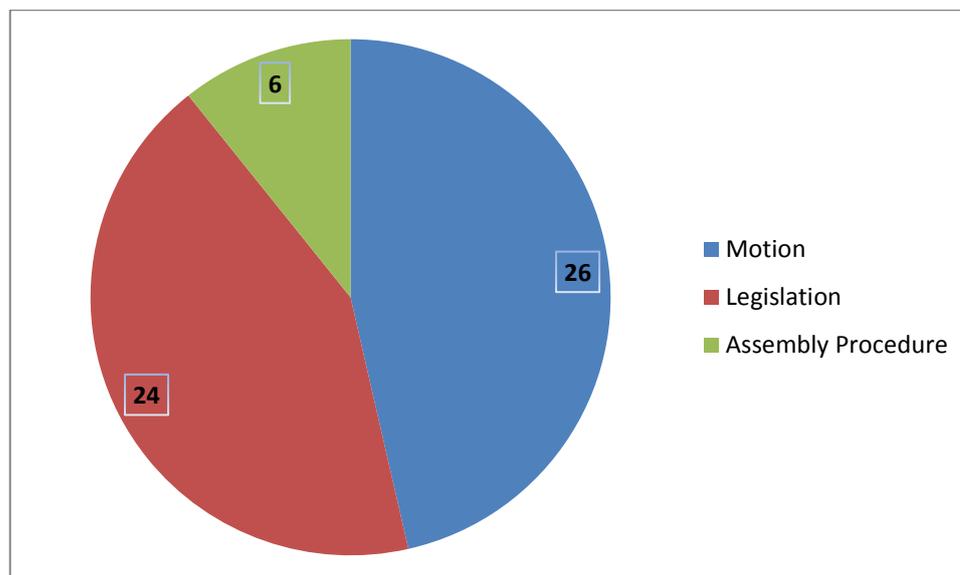


Table 2 places the number of Petitions in the context of the number of plenary sessions held in a session. Commentary is also provided in relation to periods of suspension.

**Table 2: Petitions of Concern by session and mandate including number of plenaries by session and mandate and comments on periods of suspension**

Number of plenaries by session and mandate		Petitions of concern by session and mandate
<i>2011-15 mandate up to and including 30 April 2013</i>	<i>Plenaries</i>	<i>Petitions of Concern</i>
2011-12	81	5
2012-13	67	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>2007-11 mandate</i>	<i>Plenaries</i>	<i>Petitions of Concern</i>
2006-07	18	0
2007-08	70	6
2008-09	69	4
2009-10	79	3
2010-11	52	20
<i>Total</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Hain and Transitional Assembly</i>	<i>Plenaries</i>	<i>Petitions of Concern</i>
Hain Assembly	3	0

Transitional Assembly	16	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>0</i>
<b>Comments</b>		
Northern Ireland Assembly suspended: 14 October 2002 to 8 May 2007.		
Following the passing of the Northern Ireland Act 2006 the Secretary of State created a non-legislative fixed-term Assembly, whose membership consisted of the 108 members elected in the November 2003 election. This met for the first time on 15 May 2006, its remit was to make preparations for the restoration of devolved government to Northern Ireland and for a fully restored Assembly. Its discussions informed the next round of talks called by the British and Irish Governments, held at St Andrews in October 2006.		
The St Andrews Agreement of 13 October 2006 led to the establishment of the Transitional Assembly. The Northern Ireland (St. Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 set out a timetable to restore devolution in Northern Ireland.		
<i>1998-2003</i>	<i>Plenaries</i>	<i>Petitions of Concern</i>
1998-99	15	0
1999-00	21	1
2000-01	61	3
2001-02	63	3
2002-03	12	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Comments</b>		
The Northern Ireland Assembly was elected on 25 June 1998 under the terms of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998 and met for the first time on 1 July 1998.		
The Assembly met in 'Shadow' form until legislative powers were transferred from 2 December 1999.		
Assembly suspended: 11 February to 30 May 2000.		
24-hour technical suspension: 10 August 2001.		
24-hour technical suspension: 22 September 2001.		

Table 3 provides more detailed information including:

- Subject of Petition
- Whether Petition brought by Unionists or Nationalists
- Signatories by party
- Date considered in plenary

**Table 3: Details of Petitions of Concern submitted since establishment of Assembly in 1998**

	Petition	Brought by Nationalists or Unionists?	Signatories to Petition	Date considered in Plenary
<b>Mandate 2011-2015</b>				
<b>Party representation following election:</b>  DUP: 38 SF: 29 UUP: 16 SDLP: 14 Alliance: 8 Green: 1 TUV: 1 Independent: 1	FCS - Criminal Justice Bill (NIA 10/11-15) - Amendment 1	Nationalist and Other	Sinn Fein/Alliance/Green	12/03/2013
	Establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee	Unionist	DUP	26/02/2013
	CS - Criminal Justice Bill - Amendment 26	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	25/02/2013
	CS - Criminal Justice Bill - Amendment 24	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	25/02/2013
	CS - Criminal Justice Bill - Amendment 21	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	25/02/2013
	National Crime Agency	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	01/02/13
	Commitment to Inclusivity, Mutual Respect, Peace and Democracy - Amendment 1	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	21/01/2013
	Report on complaints against Mr Jim Wells MLA	Unionist	DUP	19/11/2012
	Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements - Welfare Reform Bill	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	19/11/2012
	Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements - Welfare Reform Bill - Amendment 1	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	19/11/2012
	Marriage Equality (Revised Wording)	Unionist	DUP	01/10/2012
	Retention and Release of Information from Police Officers	Unionist	DUP	29/11/2011
	Murder of Pat Finucane -	Unionist	DUP/UUP	08/11/2011

	Amendment 1			
	Murder of Pat Finucane	Unionist	DUP/UUP	08/11/2011
	A5 Dual Carriageway Project - Amendment 1	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	07/06/2011
	A5 Dual Carriageway Project	Unionist	DUP	07/06/2011
<b>Mandate 2007-2011</b>				
<b>Party representation following election:</b>  DUP: 36 SF: 28 UUP: 18 SDLP: 16 Alliance: 7 Green: 1 PUP: 1 Independent: 1	Planning Bill - Amendment 2	Unionist	DUP	21/03/2011
	Final Stage - Local Government (Disqualification) Bill	Unionist	DUP	09/03/2011
	Planning Bill - Amendment 102	Unionist	DUP	08/03/2011
	Planning Bill - Amendment 20	Unionist	DUP	08/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 11	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 10	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 9	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 8	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 6	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Justice Bill - Amendment 5	Unionist	DUP/UUP	07/03/2011
	Armed Forces and Veterans Bill - Clauses 2 through to 8 and the Long Title	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	15/02/2011
	Armed Forces and Veterans Bill - Clause 1	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	15/02/2011
	Caravans Bill - Amendment 15	Unionist	DUP	25/01/2011
	Caravans Bill - Amendment 14 New Clause	Unionist	DUP	25/01/2011
	Caravans Bill - Amendment 13	Unionist	DUP	25/01/2011
Caravans Bill - Amendment 12	Unionist	DUP	25/01/2011	
Second Stage - Victims and Survivors (Disqualification) Bill	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	14/12/2010	

	Final Stage - Local Government (Disqualification) Bill	Unionist	DUP	07/12/2010
	Irish Language Strategy	Unionist	DUP/UUP	08/11/2010
	Proposed Rose Energy Incinerator at Glenavy	Unionist	DUP	27/09/2010
	Safe Passage to Gaza for the MV Rachel Corrie	Unionist	DUP	07/06/2010
	40th Anniversary of Disbanding of B-Specials and Formation of UDR	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	24/05/2010
	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	03/11/2009
	'Act on CO2' Advertising Campaign	Unionist	DUP	30/03/2009
	Dual Mandates	Unionist	DUP	10/03/2009
	North-South Ministerial Council	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	09/02/2009
	Civic Forum	Nationalist and Unionist	Sinn Féin/SDLP/PUP	03/02/2009
	Irish Medium Primary School	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	24/06/2008
	Irish Medium Schools in Dungannon / South Tyrone	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	13/05/2008
	Forkhill Military Site	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	07/04/2008
	FIFA Eligibility Proposal	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	11/12/2007
	Irish-Medium Club Bank	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	13/11/2007
	Irish Language	Nationalist	Sinn Féin/SDLP	09/10/2007
<b>Assembly suspended October 2002-May 2007</b>				
<b>Mandate 1998-2003</b>				
<b>Party representation following</b>	Strategic Investment and Regeneration of Sites Bill	Unionist	N/A (Assembly suspended from this date)	14/10/2002
	Election of First Minister and Deputy	Unionist/Nationalist/Other	UUP/SDLP/Alliance	05/11/2001

<b>election:</b> UUP: 28 SDLP: 24 DUP: 20 Sinn Féin: 18 Alliance: 6 UKUP: 5 PUP: 2 Northern Ireland Women's Coalition: 2 Independent: 3	First Minister			
	Motion to amend Standing Orders	Unionist	DUP/UKUP	05/11/2001
	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Nationalist and Other	SDLP/Sinn Féin/Alliance	25/09/2001
	No Confidence in Minister of Education	Nationalist	SDLP/Sinn Féin	08/05/2001
	Display of Easter Lilies in Parliament Buildings	Nationalist and Other	SDLP/Sinn Féin/Alliance/NIWC	10/04/2001
	Union Flag	Nationalist and Other	SDLP/Sinn Féin/Alliance	6/06/2000