

16 December 2013

Dear Peers,

**The lobbying bill – nine changes to protect charities**

At this time of year, many members of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations launch a Christmas appeal. This year, I'm joining them in doing so.

The lobbying bill remains a grave concern for charities and other voluntary groups.

**All I want for Christmas ...** is for you to consider supporting the amendments to the bill we list below.

They are based on the recommendations that NCVO and the Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement have made, following extensive discussions with charities and voluntary organisations as well as legal advisors and the Electoral Commission.

We firmly believe that voluntary organisations should be transparent and accountable, particularly at election time. However the bill as it stands will have a chilling effect on many charities and voluntary organisations when they want to speak out on things that matter to them and their members. The bill risks sweeping those who have no intention of directly influencing an election into its scope.

I believe these amendments, if adopted, will go a long way to alleviate the risks the bill presents to charities and voluntary organisations.

The right to campaign sits at the very heart of our democracy. Charities and other voluntary groups have a strong tradition of bringing people together to campaign on the issues they are affected by, using their knowledge and expertise to shape and challenge public policy where appropriate.

Some have suggested that charities and voluntary organisations have over-reacted to this bill. NCVO has indeed been inundated with expressions of concern from our 10,500 members – but these concerns are genuine and they are based on frontline experience. Our worries about this bill are underlined by legal advice, and shared by the Electoral Commission itself.

**National Council for Voluntary Organisations**

Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

T: 020 7713 6161 F: 020 7713 6300 E: [ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk) W: [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

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At a time of year when charities are working even harder than normal to support people, I'm asking that you please speak up for them by taking part in the debates on Monday and Wednesday, and consider supporting the following amendments.

With best wishes to you all for the holiday season,



Sir Stuart Etherington  
Chief Executive  
National Council for Voluntary Organisations

#### **Key amendments**

- 1. Support amendment 165B tabled by Lord Harries to Clause 26, Schedule 3 to amend the range of activities to remove staff costs.***
- 2. Support amendment 163A tabled by Lord Best to Clause 26, Schedule 3 to amend the range of activities to remove events and public rallies.***
- 3. Support amendments 167A and 167B tabled by Lord Harries to Clause 27 to substantially increase the registration thresholds.***
- 4. Give notice of your intention to oppose the question that Clause 28 stand part of the bill (to remove the provision in the bill that introduce constituency limits).***
- 5. Support amendment 170L tabled by Lord Harries after Clause 30 to reduce the 'regulated period' to 6 months for the 2015 general election.***
- 6. Support amendment 173 tabled by Lord Hodgson to Clause 32 to end the use of nil reports.***
- 7. Support amendment 174 tabled by Lord Hodgson to Clause 32 and 170M tabled by Lord Harries after Clause 32 to change the regulation of campaigning coalitions.***
- 8. Support amendment 181 tabled by Lord Hodgson after Clause 41 to review the operation of the Act within two years.***
- 9. Support amendment 159B tabled by Lord Harries to Clause 26, to exclude expenditure that relates to legislation before Parliament during the regulated period.***

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