



HOUSE OF COMMONS

To: All Conservative MPs

19 March 2019

Dear Colleague,

OVERSEAS ELECTORS BILL: FRIDAY 22 MARCH

I am writing to note that this Friday sees the remaining stages of the Glyn Davies' Private Members' Bill on overseas electors. This Bill implements the Conservative Party's 2015 and 2017 manifesto commitment on 'votes for life'. It would remove the current arbitrary 15 year restriction on British expats from registering to vote – a bar imposed by last Labour Government. The Bill will also make it easier for all expats to register to vote and not drop off the electoral register.

Following the British people's decision to leave the EU, we now need to strengthen ties with countries around the world and show the UK is an outward-facing nation. Our expat community has an important role to play in helping Britain expand international trade, especially given two-thirds of expats work, study and live outside the EU.

Overseas electors are the most under-represented group in our election franchise. British expats increasingly retain strong links with the United Kingdom: many have family here and will plan to return to the UK at some time in the future. Modern technology and cheaper air travel has transformed the ability of expats to keep in touch with their home country.

Of course, you will value the opportunity to spend time in your constituencies, especially after the marathon legislation of Brexit in recent weeks. However, this is an important Bill that deserves all the support it can from Conservative colleagues, and help prevent the Bill being blocked by the Labour Party.

I would like to thank Glyn for his hard work in pushing forward with this Bill, and for the ongoing assistance provided by Conservatives Abroad in encouraging Conservatives to register to vote and support you in general elections. I hope you will join us in supporting Glyn on Friday.

Yours truly,

Chloe Smith MP

Minister for the Constitution