

# MSP attempts to introduce greater protection for candidates during prison hustings

- [Home](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [All News](#)
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16 Jan 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have attempted to give political candidates greater protection during hustings in prisons.

The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill makes provisions for criminals to vote in prison and is currently being amended at stage 2 by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

The bill would enable prisoners with sentences under one year to vote, opening up the prospect of candidates canvassing votes from prisoners.

At this morning's committee meeting, Jamie Halcro Johnston introduced an amendment to protect political candidates from this potentially hazardous ordeal and ensure that prison guards and other staff have their safety put first.

The amendment was voted down by the SNP, Labour and Liberal Democrats.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP, member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee said:**

"It's bad enough that the SNP have consistently undermined our justice system with their soft touch justice, now we face the prospect of giving votes to individuals who have terrorised others.

"The idea that criminals could end up with political hustings in prison just demonstrates how ludicrous this policy is.

"Beyond the obvious concerns, some candidates may have been victims of crime and they, along with the campaign staff, should be protected.

"My amendment would have guaranteed that hustings and election events will not take place in prison without all candidates agreeing – and with a proper risk assessment conducted by prison governors to ensure the safety of prison staff, candidates, campaign staff and prisoners.

"All the other parties are seeking to extend prisoner voting even further, only the Scottish Conservatives are unequivocally against prisoners voting."