

WOMEN

50:50

www.women5050.org

Will you support Women 5050?

Who we are:

The Women 5050 campaign is a cross party group working to create a fairer Scotland for women through fair representation. Our steering group includes representatives from The SNP, The Scottish Labour Party and The Scottish Green Party. We have several equalities organisations backing us including; Engender, Scottish Women's Aid, The National Union of Students Scotland, Rape Crisis Scotland, Women for Independence and Zero Tolerance.

We believe that Scotland's political representation is an injustice to women. The Scottish Parliament currently has 36% women MSPs, our public boards have only 35% women and our councils are falling far behind with only 24%. We are advocating legislated change.

The problem:

Scotland has come a long way on equality. With women leading parties in the Scottish Parliament and a woman First Minister, it is easy to think women's equality is a resolved issue. Yet looking beyond the surface, we see rows of benches and top positions across Scotland dominated by men. Women still face institutionalised inequality, particularly in the public attitude toward their pursuit of leadership. Women face scrutiny and sexism in a way their male peers do not. These attitudes prevent women from putting themselves forward for leadership roles. Furthermore, we instill in girls that political leadership is not an avenue for them to pursue, young girls today, need more women role models in public life to aspire to. The current status quo means we have women in Scotland with the ambition and the talent, but who face attitudinal barriers preventing them from getting where they deserve to be.

Political parties are integral to this. As representatives of society, they reflect the attitudes across Scotland. Political parties can, and must, lead the way in challenging such attitudes and supporting women's leadership. Political parties are the channel by which our parliament and our councils can be 50/50 men and women and we are calling on them to take action.

The solution:

We know that the tackling attitudes is about long term education and that political parties need to do deeper work on ending sexism and supporting women candidates. We appreciate that some parties have introduced women's academies, training and mentoring schemes and know that these are hugely beneficial. We are also aware and appreciative of the voluntary mechanisms and initiatives such as twinning and all women shortlists which ensure that more women are on the frontline of politics. However, despite these measures being in place by some political parties, women remain drastically underrepresented. As such, we believe it is time for

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legislative change. **Women 5050 wants to see a legislative duty for parties in Scotland to put forward 50% women candidates from year 2020 in the Scottish Parliament and council election. We wish to see legislative duty for public bodies to have a 50% minimum number on their boards** (recognising however, that some bodies provide gender specific services where a mixed gender board would be inappropriate).

We understand and agree that democracy must remain in the hands of the voter. We do not advocate a quota on the make-up of parliamentarians, but believe a quota on the number of women candidates political parties put forward, would provide voters with a choice much more reflective of our society.

What needs to happen:

Women 5050 is seeking for the ability to implement quotas to be devolved. A special measure currently exists exempting quotas from equalities legislation for the use of all women shortlists which parties in Scotland already make use of. We believe the ability to act should be devolved fully to Scotland and a legislative duty be passed by the Scottish Parliament. This small change can make a big difference.

The Scotland Bill - What we need from you:

We need Scotland's MPs to act for women's representation. We hope that you will help us take action by pushing for the devolution of quotas on public bodies and in our parliament and councils. There is time for the Scotland Bill to deliver this.

Currently, there has been an amendment submitted to clause 32 (Equalities) that can support our work. Amendment 123:

Clause 32, page 34, line 13, at end insert, "including a requirement for gender balance among the members of the Scottish Parliament and members of boards of Scottish public authorities."

Women 5050 welcome's this amendment and any which calls for the devolution of quotas. Will you support us by voting for this amendment and support us by take forward our agenda in Westminster?

We would appreciate hearing your thoughts on the campaign and whether you will sign up to be a supporter: scottishwomen5050@gmail.com

You can read more about the campaign on our website: www.women5050.com