

Charter for Change

Independent Alliance

Charter for Government 2016

This Charter provides the basis for a radical, but responsible, government for Ireland in 2016 and beyond.

We Independents have resolved to retain our independence.

However, we recognise the need for stable government. We are willing to support a government in votes of confidence provided our principles and priorities are adequately and vigorously addressed in legislation.

We are open to several alternative ways of ensuring that our programme is implemented. We are only prepared to accept seats in cabinet if that is the best way of seeing that our principles are advanced.

If we support a government we will nonetheless reserve our right to vote and speak on all legislation according to the needs of citizens and the guidance of our individual consciences. We are willing to negotiate with government before the introduction of such legislation, but the final arbiter will be the Oireachtas, not the cabinet. Good legislation will be passed, bad legislation improved or even defeated. The government will not fall. Stability will be provided.

We will not support any government shown to be corrupt or to have promoted illegal activity.

We have set out our principles, to reform the way Ireland is governed.

1. Cronyism has contaminated Irish politics for decades. We believe politicians of all parties have grossly abused their power. We will insist that they surrender the right to make political appointments. This demand includes the end of the practice of a party in government putting its favourites on the boards of state bodies, into the judiciary, the top ranks of the Gardai and the Central Bank Commission. Independent bodies must be set up which exclude all politicians from the ranks of those making such choices. Political patronage and cronyism will end.

2. We will insist on far-reaching Oireachtas Reform, first by ensuring that no party whip is imposed on our own members. The reform must be more than token window-dressing. It will include a fundamental change in the operation of Oireachtas committees, the time given to questions, the abuse of the guillotine and the interaction with Seanad Éireann. We will require any incoming government to implement the Seanad Reform Bill introduced by Independent Alliance Parliamentary Chairman, Senator Feargal Quinn. We will seek a veto on any nominee to the posts of both Attorney General and Minister for Justice.

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3. We will make it a precondition for any incoming government that the needs of rural Ireland are addressed and the neglect of our countryside, of our rural towns and of our villages, ends. We will prioritise the development of a functioning rural broadband infrastructure. The closure of rural post offices and Garda stations has done massive damage to the social fabric of rural communities. The creation of new, stable jobs needs to be distributed nationwide for everyone to feel the benefits. The neglected rural transport network must be rebuilt. A full and functioning, customer-led banking system should be set up in smaller towns and villages. The requirement for a fairer distribution of CAP payments is paramount if we are to deliver the necessary economic stimulus.

4. We do not accept establishment claims that the banks have implemented meaningful reform. Insiders still call the shots in the financial institutions. Proposals to sell off Allied Irish Banks before the sick banking culture has changed must be postponed. The policy of promoting “pillar banks” is leading towards a duopoly. No Irish government should be allowed to privatise the banks until competition and other reforms are firmly restored or enacted. Middle Ireland needs protection to combat the banks’ role as their persecutors- in- chief.

5. We will not tolerate discrimination of any type, whether it is on the basis of gender, race, age, creed or otherwise. We believe in equal access for all to health and education. Children must be cherished, recognising that smart investment in our young people is a progressive way to secure Ireland’s future.

6. We will prioritise the needs of small business. We recognise the contribution made by the self-employed entrepreneur to the Irish economy at a time when equally necessary multinationals are receiving favourable tax treatment. All those who provide jobs for the Irish economy must receive appropriate recognition and equitable treatment.

7. Insiders, a plague on Irish public life, must be ousted. Lack of transparency and excessive salaries in government-supported bodies, like the Central Remedial Clinic and other charities, have already been exposed. Elsewhere powerful lobby groups, like the Irish Farmers Association, have failed to reveal important information to their members. These practices must end. Successive governments have lived happily alongside the unacceptable governance culture of many of these insiders.

8. Ireland should remain within the European Union. But we will not support any government that continues to play second fiddle to other countries in Europe. We will not permit any coalition of which we are part to pursue the path of deference to powerful European leaders. Ireland must challenge the European consensus, dominated by the needs of Germany and France. We must no longer be one of a group of small nations, obedient observers at the tables of the rich countries. Proposals from Europe that are an obstacle to progress should be opposed, not rubber-stamped.

9. Ireland’s most vulnerable must be protected. We will sign a separate, binding pact with any other group in government that the sick, the elderly, those worst- off in society and those with additional needs, must be given priority. We will insist this pledge is underpinned by legislation, including the enactment of our Equality of Access (Down’s Syndrome) Bill within the first six months of government. The next government should ratify the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, without delay.

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10. Criminals are winning the battle against crime. Serial offenders should not be given the privilege of bail. Our prisons should not be full of minor offenders who pose no threat to society. Garda morale is consequently at a low ebb. Community policing has been neglected. As a result, Garda intelligence-gathering has failed to stop the spike in burglaries and other offences. Garda whistle-blowers have been treated shamefully. A complete overhaul of our Justice system is necessary.

Our mission is nothing less than to end the abuses born out of civil war politics. We abhor the phoney differences dominating Irish public life, a legacy of the contrived political battles waged between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour. Unlike them, we will not do any special constituency deals as a price for going into government.

The Independent Alliance is a unique force in Irish politics. We deplore the party whip imposed by all other groups, large or small. We aim to change Irish politics radically, whether in or out of cabinet. This is our Charter for change.

12th January 2016

Entered into by the UNDERSIGNED:

Councillor Kevin Callan, Louth

Councillor Sean Canney, Galway East

Councillor Marie Casserley, Sligo-Leitrim

Senator Gerard Craughwell, Labour Panel

Councillor Mick Finn, Cork South-Central

Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice, Roscommon-Galway

Deputy Thomas Fleming, Kerry

Councillor John Foley, Offaly

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Councillor Paul Gogarty, Dublin Mid-West

Deputy John Halligan, Waterford

Carol Hunt, Dún Laoghaire

Councillor Niamh Kennedy, Donegal

Deputy Finian McGrath, Dublin Bay North

Councillor David McGuinness, Dublin West

Councillor Kevin ‘Boxer’ Moran, Longford Westmeath

James Morgan, Longford Westmeath

Councillor Tony Murphy, Dublin Fingal

Councillor Lorna Nolan, Dublin West

Councillor Deirdre O’Donovan, Dublin South West

Diarmuid O’ Flynn, Cork North West

Senator Feargal Quinn, National University of Ireland Panel

Deputy Shane Ross, Dublin Rathdown

Councillor Maeve Yore, Louth