

John Bercow MP
House of Commons
London
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2nd June 2009

Dear John,

As I think you know, I am putting myself forward for the Speakership. I therefore thought it only courteous to set out in some detail my vision for the role if I were fortunate enough to be elected.

Accordingly, I enclose what might be termed a "reform prospectus" – if not a manifesto – which addresses the issues under five separate headings. I hope you find this helpful.

1. The Context

The next Speaker faces an unprecedented challenge – to help clean up politics, to place Parliament at the centre of an effective democracy and to build a relationship of mutual respect with the electorate.

2. My Own Candidature

I have a track record of political independence, pursue unfashionable but important causes on a non-partisan basis, and can demonstrate competence in chairing and communicating alike.

3. Allowances and Expenses

We must accept external advice on a new allowances' system, ensure that the majority of MPs who have to live in two places are able to do so and redouble our efforts to make Parliament more representative of the country we serve.

4. Putting Parliament First

We need greater independence for Parliament from the executive; we need enhanced scrutiny both of policy and of legislation; we need better use of time and more opportunities for backbenchers to challenge the government.

5. Speaker as Ambassador

The next Speaker has to be a Speaker and a Listener, explaining the role of the House and the work of individual Members, but also listening to and, as appropriate, assimilating the views of the public.

This is no time for interim measures or party manoeuvring for future advantage. Indeed, the House needs to elect a Speaker who has a mandate to take Parliament forward in the critical years that lie ahead. As a matter of principle, I believe strongly that the post of Speaker should not be a job for life but an opportunity to make a difference within a reasonable period of time. If you do me the honour of electing me, I will serve for no longer than two full Parliaments and, in any event, for no more than 9 years in total. Any Speaker should be able to make a mark in that time and his or her successor should then be elected by experienced MPs in the existing Parliament before a General Election. It should not be done after a General Election, on party political grounds, by newly elected MPs who do not know the candidates.

If you want to discuss any of the issues I have raised, I would be pleased to hear from you. I should be honoured if you would support me in the election on 22nd June.

With best wishes,



John Bercow