

Oireachtas Update



In the Dáil, the Order for Second Stage and Second Stage of the Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 will be on the agenda on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Roads Bill 2015 will be reaching its Final Stage on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill 2014, the Workplace Relations Bill 2014, and the Garda Síochána (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2014, are all on the Seanad's timetable this week.

Minister of State Ann Phelan will be presenting on Tuesday to the Joint Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht about the challenges that exist for rural Ireland. The Joint Committee on Transport and Communications will hear from Energia, SSE Airtricity, Electric Ireland and Bord Gáis Energy representatives on Wednesday on the topic of the cost of electricity and gas to consumers in the context of falling international wholesale crude oil and gas prices.

Chairperson and Eight Commissioners of Low Pay Commission appointed

Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash TD, has appointed Dr Donal de Buitléir as Chairperson of the Low Pay Commission. Dr de Buitléir is Director of Publicpolicy.ie. The Low Pay Commission will advise the Government on an annual basis on an appropriate National Minimum Wage rate. Eight members to serve on the Commission were also appointed by the Minister following a competition advertised by the Public Appointments Service.

The current national minimum wage in Ireland is €8.65. In order to begin its work to set the minimum wage, the Commission will meet shortly for the first time to examine changes in earnings since the minimum wage was last increased in 2011; unemployment and employment rates; the expected impact of minimum wage adjustment on employment, cost of living and national competitiveness; and currency exchange rates.

€300 Housing Investment Programme jointly backed by HFA and EIB

A new investment programme, announced last Wednesday, will see a €150 million fund from the European Investment Bank, matched by €150 million from the Housing Finance Agency, available for lending to Approved Housing Bodies for investment in social housing. This is the first time that the European Investment Bank has provided support for housing in Ireland.

The new programme will give housing bodies access to long-term (25 year) fixed rate funding at competitive rates. HFA CEO, Barry O'Leary, said; "We expect the fund to be significantly oversubscribed".

Children and Family Relationships Bill published

Last week the Children and Family Relationships Bill was published. The Bill amends the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 to extend law relating to the guardianship of children for those living with cohabiting parents or civil partners, or with a parent and step-parent, civil partner, cohabiting partner, relative or another guardian. It also sets out provisions concerning custody and access for each of these situations.

The Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act 1976, the Family Law Act 1995 and the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 have been amended to extend the category of people liable for the maintenance of children.

The Adoption Act 2010 has been amended to extend its provisions to civil partners and cohabiting couples. Civil partners, and cohabiting partners living together for three years, will have the right to apply jointly to adopt a child. It also provides for adoptive leave.

A man or woman can be the second parent of a donor-conceived child born to the woman or man's spouse, civil partner or cohabiting partner, as long as certain requirements set out in the Bill are fulfilled. The Parental Leave Act 1998 and the Maternity Protection Act 1994 have been amended to enable a female second parent to have the same rights as a father.

Provision has been made for a national donor-conceived person register to be established to enable a donor-conceived child to ascertain his/her identity, in accordance with the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

China lifts ban on Irish beef

It has been announced that China has formally lifted its ban on Irish beef. Ireland is now the only European country to have had bans lifted on its beef products in both the United States and China. The lifting of the ban follows veterinary inspections carried out in December 2014 by a Chinese team.

The next step in the process will involve the agreement of a protocol to decide which meat cuts to be exported and a veterinary certificate. Following this, a Chinese veterinary inspection will take place to approve individual processing plants for export.

PAI BLOG

Reducing Poverty in Ireland : Read [here](#)

DAIL

Tuesday 24 February

Wednesday 25 February

Thursday 26 February

2.00 p.m.

Questions (Minister for Children and Youth Affairs)

3.15 p.m.

Leaders Questions

3.36 p.m.

Questions (Taoiseach)

4.36 p.m.

Order of Business

Motion re Capital Carryover (Referral to Committee) (without Debate)
(Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)**5.06 p.m.**

Topical Issues

Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 - Order for Second Stage and Second Stage (Department of Justice and Equality) (to adjourn after opening speeches)

7.30 p.m.

Private Members Business - Motion re Income and Living Conditions (Technical Group)

9.30 p.m.

Dáil Adjourns

9.30 a.m.

Questions (Minister for Health)

10.45 a.m.Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 - Second Stage (Resumed)
(Department of Justice and Equality)**12.00 noon**

Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.

Order of Business

12.51 p.m.

SOS (1 Hour)

1.51 p.m.

Topical Issues

2.39 p.m.Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 - Second Stage (Resumed)
(Department of Justice and Equality)Roads Bill 2014 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages
(Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)**7.30 p.m.**

Private Members Business - Motion re Income and Living Conditions (Technical Group)

9.00 p.m.

Dáil Adjourns

9.30 a.m.

Questions (Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade)

10.45 a.m.Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015 - Second Stage (resumed)
(Department of Justice and Equality)Roads Bill 2014 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages
(Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015 - Second Stage (resumed)
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)**12.00 noon**

Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.

Order of Business

Morning Business continued

4.42 p.m.

Topical Issues

5.30 p.m.

Dáil Adjourns

SEANAD

Tuesday 24 February

Wednesday 25 February

Thursday 26 February

2.30 p.m.

Commencement Matters

3.30 p.m.

Order of Business

4.45 p.m.Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill 2014 - Second Stage
(Department of Justice and Equality)**10.30 a.m.**

Commencement Matters

12.00 noon

Order of Business

2.00 p.m.Workplace Relations Bill 2014 – Committee Stage (resumed)
(Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)**5.00 p.m.**Private Members Business – TBC
(Fianna Fáil Senators)**10.30 a.m.**

Commencement Matters

12.00 noon

Order of Business

1.15 p.m.Garda Síochána (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2014 – Committee and Remaining Stages
(Department of Justice and Equality)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Tuesday 24 February

1.30 p.m.
Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Joint)
CR2, LH
AGENDA: (i) Scrutiny of EU legislative proposals: Schedule A -COM(2014)693 Proposal for the management of autonomous tariff quotas of the Union for certain agricultural and industrial product.
(ii) Low Pay and the Living Wage
Session A: 1.45 p.m.
[Representatives from ISME; and Mr. Seamus Coffey, UCC]
Session B: 2.45 p.m.
[Dr. Micheál Collins, NERI; and Representatives from IBEC]

2 p.m.
Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Select)
CR3, LH
AGENDA: 2015 Revised Estimates for Public Services - Vote 30 (Agriculture, Food and the Marine) [Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine]

2 p.m.
European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR1, LH
AGENDA: United Kingdom: Possible Exit from the European Union (commonly referred to as 'Brexit'): Ireland/UK Economic Interdependence. [Mr. Joe Durkan, Lecturer, School of Economics, University College Dublin]

2.15 p.m.
Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht (Joint)
CR4, LH
AGENDA: The challenges and issues that exist for rural Ireland [Ms. Ann Phelan T.D., Minister of State for Rural Affairs at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government]

Wednesday 25 February

9.30 a.m.
Inquiry into the Banking Crisis (Joint)
CR1, LH
AGENDA: Session A: 9.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.
Public Hearing [Prof. Gregory Connor, NUI Maynooth on issues relating to banking policy, systems and practices which may have underpinned the Banking Crisis in Ireland]
Session B: 11.45 a.m. - 1.45 p.m.
Public Hearing [Prof. Eamonn Walsh, UCD on issues relating to the regulatory and supervisory policies, systems and practices which may have underpinned the Banking Crisis in Ireland]

9.30 a.m.
Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000
AGENDA: The cost of electricity and gas to consumers in the context of falling international wholesale crude oil and gas prices (resumed) [Representatives from Energia; SSE Airtricity; Electric Ireland; and Bord Gáis Energy]

1 p.m.
Education and Social Protection (Joint)
CR3, LH
AGENDA: Higher and further education grants, in particular the operation and effects of the current approach to income assessment [Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI); SUSI Appeals Board; and the Department of Education and Skills]

2 p.m.
European Scrutiny - Finance and Public Expenditure (Joint sub)
CR4, LH
AGENDA: Private Meeting

2.30 p.m.
Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform (Joint)
CR4, LH
AGENDA: Pre-Legislative Scrutiny on the Draft Heads of the Finance (Tax Appeals Commission) Bill [resumed] [Mr. John TC O'Callaghan and Mr. Rónán F Kelly, Office of the Appeal Commissioners]

2.30 p.m.
Foreign Affairs and Trade (Joint)
CR1, LH
AGENDA: The role and interaction of the GAA with the Irish diaspora. [Mr. Liam Ó Néill President, GAA]

2.30 p.m.
Justice, Defence and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH
AGENDA: Undocumented migrants living in Ireland [Representatives from the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland]

3 p.m.
Education and Social Protection (Select)
CR3, LH
AGENDA: Private Meeting

4 p.m.
Public Service, Oversight and Petitions (Joint)
CR3, LH
AGENDA: Report on "Person or Number ?2": A second examination of issues faced by immigrants in accessing social protection [Mr. Joe O'Brien, Policy Officer, Crosscare]

6 p.m.
Procedure and Privileges (Dáil Éireann) Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Thursday 26 February

9 a.m.
Inquiry into the Banking Crisis (Joint)
CR3, LH
AGENDA: Session A: 9:00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.
Public Hearing [Mr David McWilliams on early warnings, divergent and contrarian views]
Session B: 11.45 a.m. – 1.45 p.m.
Public Hearing [Prof Terrence McDonough on International, EU and domestic policy contexts]

9.30 a.m.
Health and Children (Joint)
CR2, LH
AGENDA: (i) Rare Disease Implementation Plan [Mr. Tony Heffernan, Saoirse; Ms. Avril Daly, CEO, Genetic and Rare Disorders Organisation (GRDO); and Representatives from the HSE and Department of Health and Children]; and
(ii) Addiction treatment and recovery models [Mr. Martin Keane, Health Research Board; and Mr. Gerry McAleenan, Soilse, HSE Drug Rehabilitation Programme]

10 a.m.
Education and Skills (Select sub)
CR4, LH
AGENDA: Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2014 [Mr. Damien English, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills]

10 a.m.
Public Accounts
CR1, LH
AGENDA: Business of the Committee; and Report on the Wards of Court; and Comptroller and Auditor General Appropriation Accounts 2013
(i) Vote 13: Office of Public Works; and
(ii) Chapter 4: Accounting for Office of Public Works Agency Services [Officials from the Office of Public Works]

2 p.m.
European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR2, LH
AGENDA: United Kingdom: Possible Exit from the European Union (commonly referred to as 'Brexit'): Treaty Protocols and Criminal Justice issues.
[Prof. Imelda Maher, Sutherland Chair in European Law, UCD; and Mr. Eugene Regan, Senior Counsel]



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