

Senator John Dolan's

GUIDE TO SEANAD ELECTION VOTING*

The purpose of this short guide is to help Seanad voters, especially first-time voters, understand the particular procedures that apply to voting in Seanad Elections.

I put together this guide after analyzing the 2016 results and finding that up to 20 votes were ruled invalid as the guidance on the certificate and declaration of identity (both of which are supplied by the "authorized person") were not followed.

An authorized person is the Seanad Returning Officer and/or your Local Authority CEO, Registrar or Sheriff who oversee the voting. They are there to help you ensure that your voice is heard and that your vote counts equally. **This guide is not a substitute for their advice or assistance.**

I hope this guide helps first time voters become familiar with the procedures.

**This is meant as a guide only and is NOT a substitute for the information and instructions provided by the Seanad Returning Officer.*



JOHN DOLAN

SEANAD VOTING CHECKLIST:

Please see back page for further details.

- 1 You should receive your ballots papers to your official address shortly after 16th March by registered post.**
- 2 When the registered envelope arrives it should contain:**
 - ✓ 5 Seanad ballot papers – one for each panel
 - ✓ An envelope in which you place the 5 marked ballot papers
 - ✓ A second pre registered covering envelope in which you will need to return your ballot papers and declaration of identity
 - ✓ Instructions from the Returning Officer
- 3 Contact your "authorized person" to arrange a time and date to vote.**
- 4 Make sure to bring everything with you to vote:**
 - ✓ The envelope you received (the one with your address on it)
 - ✓ The 5 ballot papers **unmarked**
 - ✓ The two other envelopes sent to you (one for the 5 ballot papers and the covering envelope in which the ballots and declaration are returned to the Seanad).
- 5 After voting, place ALL 5 ballot papers in the ballot paper envelope. This envelope is then placed inside the outer pre-paid return envelope.**
- 6 Ensure the authorized person supplies you with a **declaration of identity**, which they sign and place inside the return envelope AND a **certificate** which they sign and affix to the outside of the return envelope.**
- 7 Return the filled envelope to the Seanad by registered post to arrive before 11am Monday 30th March 2020. (Ballot papers may not be hand delivered.)**



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HOW IT WORKS.

Each Seanad voter will receive an envelope, by registered post, from the Seanad Election Returning Officer. This will go to your official address.

The envelope contains 5 ballot papers – one for each of the 5 panels. You vote separately on each panel. It will also contain a ballot paper envelope (in which you place your 5 marked ballot papers) AND a pre-paid and registered envelope. You place the envelope with ballots inside this registered envelope.

All 5 ballot papers must be returned to the Seanad Returning Officer whether they are marked or not.

You must also include a completed declaration of identity which you get from the authorised person, in whose presence you vote and a certificate which they attach to the outside return envelope.

The 5 ballot papers must be returned to the Seanad by **registered post** in the pre-paid envelope provided to arrive before **11am Monday 30th March 2020**. To achieve this you must present your prepaid registered envelope at a post office and receive a receipt of registration.

WHO IS AN AUTHORISED PERSON?

It is a **secret ballot** but you still vote in the presence of an “authorised person”, this can be:

- Seanad Returning Officer/Clerk of Dáil Éireann/ Clerk-Assistant of Dáil or Seanad Éireann (this applies to TDs and Senators)
- The Chief Executive/county registrar/sheriff and/or for the county/city that appears in the address on the envelope sent to you
- The Garda Síochána Superintendent in your district can also act as an authorized person.

Councillors should contact the Chief Executive’s Office at their Council now to check what arrangements their Council is putting in place for them to vote in the presence of the authorized person. If you are part of a party or grouping, your group Whip will probably make arrangements – no harm to check with them now.

REMEMBER the **certificate** and **declaration of identity** which you must return with your completed ballots are both **supplied to you by the authorized person** – they must sign both.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS GUIDE?

In 2016, there was a shortfall of 31 votes – and that equals 22% of a quota!

11 did not vote

20 were declared spoiled or invalid:

- 11 did not have the Certificate on the covering envelope
- 1 had an incomplete Certificate on the covering envelope
- 4 did not complete the declarations of identity
- 1 returned fewer than 5 ballot papers
- 3 more were rejected (no clear preference or not marked)

This highlights the importance of making sure that both the Certificate and the Declaration of Identity (both of which are provided by the authorised person – i.e. Council CEO or County Registrar, Seanad/Dáil clerk etc.) are both included and are completed correctly.