

How to make the changes, and why

Mid-West Humanists to Candidates for Election to Dáil Éireann 2020

The Mid-West Humanists are people who meet monthly (since 2008), who tend away from religion.

Dear Candidate

The referenda of 2015 (same sex marriage, 63% Yes), 2018 (abortion legal, 62% Yes), and 2018 (blasphemy offence gone, 81% Yes) showed that people in Ireland want less influence of religion on society and the State.

Other influences remain, and so we ask -

1- That you support changing the Constitution to have a single secular Declaration for judges, the President, and the Council of State, and to require this in all State declarations (in court, in polling stations).

2- That you support Bills and regulations to ensure *all* our state funded schools have equality, inclusion and fairness in the following -

- (a) Admission with no discrimination by religion
- (b) To teach all children about many religions and about no religion, within normal school time; and classes to teach belief in a religion *outside* normal school hours
- (c) End discrimination by religion in employment of teachers
- (d) No religious icons in view in schools

1. The Constitution and legal Declarations.

The Bill to amend the Constitution will remove the phrase "in the presence of Almighty God" and the sentence "May God direct and sustain me" from the declarations on starting public office from 3 Articles of the Constitution. At present, a Judge (article 34.6.1) must promise to do the job faithfully "in the presence of Almighty God". Some judges have no religion, or their religion has no single almighty god, and thus on the first day of work they are forced to lie. We need honest judges. And we need to NOT know their religion or lack of religion, so as to avoid thinking a judge is biased. So there should be only ONE declaration.

The President (article 12.8) must also mention God, in the same words. Members of the Council of State (article 31.4) also must mention God, by the first phrase only. At least one member of the Council (then Tánaiste Éamon Gilmore) was thus forced to lie in 2013.

The same Bill could insert a rule that all legal declarations that the State demands must be secular.

2. State Funded Schools - that receive public money.

The Bills will be to amend the Education Act 1998, the Equal Status Act 2000, and the Employment Equality Act 1998.

The system of National Schools, and the Lease of each National School, gives power to the Minister for Education to make rules for National Schools. Part of achieving (a), (b), (c), and (d) in Primary (National) schools will be by the Minister changing the rules.

The Constitution requires these changes - it directs that schools be secular - Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution notes that every child has a right "to attend a school receiving public money", and also that same right "without attending religious instruction at that school".

Article 42.3.2 of the Constitution sets the State a duty that "children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual, and social". Social education means coming to understand the people among whom you live. This includes learning about the variety of ideas and beliefs of your fellow students and of adults. So every child at school should meet and understand all of the children that live in their society - together, not segregated.