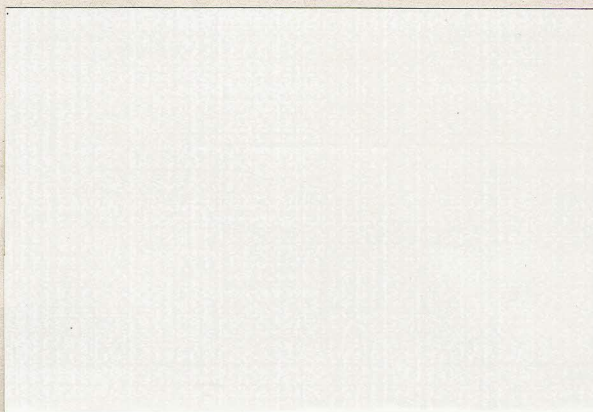




Cabinet Office

1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Telephone +44 (0)20 7276 0527
Web www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk



22 February 2018

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 2018, regarding overseas voting rights. Your letter has been passed to the Constitution Group within the Cabinet Office, who deal with this matter.

'Votes for life' has been a Government manifesto commitment since 2015. Subject to securing the necessary Parliamentary approval, the Government's aim is to deliver votes for life for British citizens resident overseas ahead of the next scheduled General Election in 2022.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Government intends to support the Private Member's Bill on Overseas Electors on the 23 February 2018. The Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, will be speaking in the debate. As this is a Private Members' Bills (PMB), it follows specific scheduling procedures. PMBs can be debated only on sitting Fridays in a Parliamentary session. These rules are set by Parliament rather than Government.

In order to become law, 'votes for life' must first be debated and agreed to by both Houses of Parliament. The passage of a Bill typically takes 9-12 months from the point it is introduced, followed by detailed secondary legislation. The full complement of primary legislation (to amend the Representation of the People Act 1985), secondary legislation (to amend the Representation of the People Regulations 2001 and equivalent in Northern Ireland) as well as ministerial guidance will be needed to give proper effect to the policy. There was just not enough time to complete this process ahead of the 2017 snap election.

Yours sincerely,

Elena Gorianova
Constitution Group | Cabinet Office