

BONUS KEY TOPIC DEBATE: SHOULD THE HOUSE OF LORDS BE REFORMED?

- ✓ **Full or partial election would raise the democratic authority and legitimacy of the second chamber.**
 - » Probably the most common argument against the House of Lords is that its role is indefensible. The most recent reforms cutting the number of hereditary peers doesn't make it more democratic.
- ✗ **If the democratic status of the second chamber were increased it might challenge the authority of the Commons, leading to gridlock.**
 - » An elected chamber would have a new sense of legitimacy and would see no need to give way to the Commons as they currently do. This problem would be further complicated if party control in the two chambers were different.
- ✓ **An elected chamber would be a more effective check on the executive.**
 - » A more assertive second chamber can only be a good thing in a country that is often described as an 'elective dictatorship'.
 - » The current size of the chamber, largely because Prime Ministers seek to 'pack' the House with their supporters, is unsustainable.
- ✗ **Since 1999 the Lords has proved to be a useful check on the executive-dominated Commons, suggesting there is no need for any further reform.**
 - » It has defeated the government hundreds of times since the bulk of hereditary peers were removed in 1997.
 - » Nearly 25% of Lords are crossbenchers (or independents), this means they are unafraid to challenge the Government.
- ✓ **Election might inject a more 'professional' element into the second chamber.**
 - » Every year there are criticisms of many peers who turn up for their daily attendance allowance of around £300 without participating in any debates or business of the House.
 - » Additionally, the cash for peerages scandal and accusations of cronyism (see Chapter 3 page 66) have undermined the reputation of the House.
- ✗ **Election would eliminate the many current professional appointed members who represent minority groups in society or are experts in their field, but who would not stand for election.**
 - » All the experience of the ex-ministers and Prime Ministers in the House of Lords we have currently would be lost.
 - » Currently, the chamber contains people who have experience of something other than professional politics, which cannot be said for many MPs in the Commons.
- ✓ **If it was elected using a system of proportional representation the Lords could be said to more accurately represent the wishes of the people and would allow small parties to have more influence on the legislative process.**
 - » Smaller parties have benefited from the use of PR for the devolved institutions.
- ✗ **Because it is appointed, the Lords has been able to more closely mirror the popular vote at the last General Election than the Commons.**
 - » The Liberal Democrats, for example have about 10% of the Lords.

Key Debate Summary: Should the House of Lords be reformed?

FOR	AGAINST
✓ Full or partial election would raise the democratic authority and legitimacy of the second chamber. ✓ An elected chamber would be a more effective check on the executive. ✓ Election might inject a more 'professional' element into the second chamber. ✓ If it was elected using a system of proportional representation, the Lords could be said to more accurately represent the wishes of the people and would allow small parties to have more influence on the legislative process.	✗ If the democratic status of the second chamber were increased it might challenge the authority of the Commons, leading to gridlock. ✗ Since 1999 the Lords has proved to be a useful check on the executive-dominated Commons, suggesting there is no need for any further reform. ✗ Election would eliminate the many current professional appointed members who represent minority groups in society or are experts in their field, but who would not stand for election. ✗ Because it is appointed, the Lords has been able to more closely mirror the popular vote at the last general election than the Commons.