

General Election 2010

Constitution Unit guide: How the parties' political reforms compare

Electoral Reform

- **Conservative:** Firmly committed to retaining First past the post.
- **Labour:** Referendum on AV, to be held at same time as referendum on elected House of Lords. AV is a non proportional voting system which retains single member constituencies. It would ensure each MP is elected by a majority of their constituents.
- Votes at 16.
- **Lib Dems:** Referendum on STV, which is a multi-member proportional system, typically with 3-5 MPs representing each large constituency. Votes at 16.

Lords reform

- **Conservative:** Not first term priority. 80% elected second chamber, reduced to 250 – 300 members. Staggered elections with one third being elected at each general election by first past the post, from 80 three member constituencies (240 members would be elected and 60 would be appointed).
- **Labour:** 100% elected, 300 members, simultaneous referendum on this and electoral reform for Commons. Staggered elections in thirds, by regional party lists.
- **Lib Dems:** 100% elected, by STV.

Parliamentary reform

- **Conservative:** Reduce House of Commons by 10%, to 585 MPs. Power of recall to allow voters to remove MPs mid term if guilty of serious wrongdoing. English votes on English laws. Right to petition Parliament to trigger topical debates.
- **Labour:** Fixed term parliaments. Power of recall triggered by 10% of constituents. Ban on MPs working for lobbying companies.
- **Lib Dems:** Reduce House of Commons to 500 MPs. Fixed term parliaments. Power of recall triggered by 5% of constituents.

British Bill of Rights

- **Conservative:** Repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British bill of rights which would direct the courts to balance rights with responsibilities, and public safety.
- **Labour:** Extend HRA to social and economic rights, such as health and housing; but non justiciable. Enshrine citizens' responsibilities such as voting and jury service.
- **Lib Dems:** Bill of rights to be part of new written constitution.

Written Constitution

- **Conservative:** Not interested.
- **Labour:** Start by bringing together into a single document the various statutes, treaties and conventions which constitute the current British constitution. Process will take some time and will probably involve a referendum.
- **Lib Dems:** Have long supported a written constitution.

Devolution and Decentralisation

- **Conservative:** Simultaneous referendums on elected mayors in large cities. Power to instigate referendums on local issues, and to veto council tax rises. Elected police commissioners. Tax-raising powers for the Scottish Parliament, and law-making powers for the Welsh Assembly. English votes on English laws.

- **Labour:** Taxation powers for Scottish Parliament, and primary legislative powers for Wales
- **Lib Dems:** Devolve more powers to local councils, including local income tax. Grant stronger fiscal powers for Scottish Parliament, and legislative powers for Wales

Europe

- **Conservative:** All future EU Treaties to be subject to mandatory referendum. Sovereignty Bill to re-affirm the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.
- **Labour:**
- **Lib Dems:** Join the Euro, but only after a referendum.

Direct and deliberative democracy

- **Conservative:** Referendums on future EU Treaties. Petitions to require Parliament to debate issues, and consider laws. Simultaneous referendums on elected mayors. Elected police commissioners. Power to instigate referendums on local issues, and veto council tax rises. Power to recall MPs.
- **Labour:** Simultaneous referendum on electoral reform and Lords reform. Power to recall MPs.
- **Lib Dems:** Referendum on electoral reform. Power to recall MPs.

Civil liberties

- **Conservative:** Scrap ID cards, restrict DNA database
- **Labour:** Allow protests outside Parliament
- **Lib Dems:** Restore all freedoms undermined over past 20 years in single Act of Parliament. Freedom Bill will scrap ID cards, remove innocent people from the DNA database, regulate CCTV, and allow protests outside Parliament.