

General Election 2010

Constitution Unit forecasts: Which of the parties' political reforms will be implemented?

Conservative majority government will

- Reduce House of Commons by 10 per cent during next Parliament
- Hold simultaneous referendums on elected mayors in large cities
- Enact an EU Treaties (Referendums) and Sovereignty Bill
- Allow petitions to require Parliament to debate issues, and laws
- Introduce power of recall to allow voters to remove their MP mid term
- Introduce a British bill of rights.

The last four changes will make little or no difference in practice. The EU Treaties (Referendums) Bill can be ignored by future parliaments. In other countries which have a power of recall, it is almost never used. In Canada and New Zealand, which have had a right of citizens' initiative for 25 years, petitioners have not so far succeeded in changing a single law. The British bill of rights will simply be the ECHR re-packaged.

Conservative majority government will not

- Legislate for an elected House of Lords, because it is not a high priority issue
- Introduce English votes on English laws, because implementation is too complicated, and with a Conservative majority the problem will have gone away
- Introduce elected police commissioners, because the police are strongly opposed, and it will raise fears of politicisation.

Conservative minority government with Lib Dem support will

- Move faster towards an elected second chamber, to fend off Lib Dem demands for PR for the Commons
- Find it harder to introduce a British bill of rights which undershoots the ECHR

Labour majority government will

- Introduce fixed term parliaments, and a power of recall
- Hold a referendum on AV for the House of Commons
- Find it more difficult to agree the details of an elected second chamber, because the Cabinet and party remains deeply divided
- Find it difficult to introduce a British bill of rights, because the Cabinet will continue to be fearful of granting any more justiciable rights

Labour minority government with Lib Dem support will

- Find it harder to agree on voting reform, because the Lib Dems want STV or AV+, not straight AV
- Be pushed into faster progress on an elected second chamber, because the Lib Dems are more committed
- Be pushed into further reform of party funding.