

Vote on Gender Recognition Reform Bill delayed

MSPs sat until late on Wednesday evening, but due to delays and more than 150 amendments tabled for discussion, voting did not take place on the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill on Wednesday, but may take place on Thursday after First Minister's Questions.

Today is the final business day of The Scottish Parliament before the Christmas and New Year recess.

This bill has caused division among members of the same party and also between parties. The legislation is intended to simplify the process by which someone who is trans must go through to obtain a gender recognition certificate. It will remove the requirement under existing legislation for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

The government maintains that the new law would not have any effect on the Equality Act (which excludes trans people from single sex spaces) and once in place the legislation would lower the minimum age for anyone wishing to obtain such a certificate to 16. The SNP are largely backed by the Scottish Greens and a majority of Scottish Labour.

In addition, under the new law the length of time that an

applicant would have to live in their acquired gender would shorten to three months from two years, but would be six months for younger people aged 16 and 17.

A large group, mostly women and most of whom were wearing the purple green and white of the suffragette movement, congregated yesterday at the corner of The Scottish Parliament building on Wednesday lunchtime where campaigners spoke against the adoption of the bill.

Most opposers to the legislation highlight that the simpler process could be used by predatory men to gain access to single sex spaces, or to assault women and children. The legislation has been discussed and consulted on since 2017 and has used up more parliamentary time than most other bills. Debate on Tuesday ran on until the lights went out at midnight. On Wednesday night the discussions began from 1.15pm and lasted for the best part of twelve hours.

The vote is expected to pass the legislation into law, but even at the eleventh hour campaigners stood up outside Holyrood to express their views. The crowd responded with chants of "Sturgeon out!" and "Women won't wheesht".

Voting will take place in Holyrood this afternoon after [#FMQs](#) on the controversial Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. Yesterday those who oppose the bill gathered outside the Scottish Parliament saying the legislation would allow predatory men access to single sex spaces pic.twitter.com/YRL3zVkSVH

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [December 22, 2022](#)



A small crowd gathered outside Holyrood on 21 December 2022 when MSPs continued to debate the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill



Johann Lamont former leader of the Scottish Labour party
Former Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont pointed out the discussion had already gone on for six years. She said: "We

may have been asking questions for six years but we have yet to find an answer that justifies the action that is going on in the parliament today. It is a deep offence to women who through generations have demanded that they ought not to be defined by their sex but given opportunities that they deserve.”

Neal Hanvey MP, former SNP MP and now leader of the Alba party at Westminster, said: “I would never have chosen silence. Courage to speak up is fundamental to safeguarding. I refuse to be a coward. This is not over. We will prevail!”

Joanna Cherry KC, and SNP MP for Edinburgh South West said that the government should delay taking a decision on the bill and go “back to the drawing board”, pointing out that it would not be a climbdown to delay because of “problems thrown up by this legislation”. She told the crowd she was in Edinburgh to support her SNP MSP colleagues who share her deep reservations about the system of self-identification that would be imposed by this bill.

She said “For me, like a lot of you, this is a matter of conscience. Contrary to popular opinion, I am not actually a rebel, I’m just a politician who believes in evidence-based policy making, free speech and universal human rights. Opposition to this legislation across Scotland is deep, widespread and overwhelming. Forcing it through is not a show of strength, it’s a show of weakness.

“Even if this bill passes there will be women only services in Scotland for the survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, thanks to JK Rowling.

“Things look a bit dark today as it looks as though this legislation is going to pass, not surprising it is dark on the shortest day of the year. But from tomorrow the days will get longer, and we will win this fight. The women’s movement has been rejuvenated by this fight and also the gay rights

movement. Lesbians like myself, gays and bisexual people who thought we were being erased from our own struggle and our own history have found our voice again.”



Joanna Cherry KC MP spoke out against the bill explaining her reasons why she and some of the SNP MSPs are so concerned about it.



Rachael Hamilton a Tory MSP said: “Today we will try to bring forward more amendments to make this bill better. I don’t think we are going to get the support. I think at the end of the day we will unfortunately lose our argument. But this argument has been made more palatable by every one of you standing here who have been so persistent, so passionate – and so right to question this bill.”

Ash Regan, SNP MSP for Edinburgh Eastern, was formerly a minister but resigned over this matter. She was warmly welcomed by the audience and said: “You have no idea how much strength people like me are drawing from the support we are getting from you guys. Thank you so much. In my opinion a woman is not a costume, it is not a feeling, it’s a material reality that is grounded in biology.”

You can read the whole proceedings from Holyrood on this matter as discussed on Wednesday in the Official Report [here](#).



Parliament begins the Stage 3 Proceedings of the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. After an hour delay due to time tabling amendments. 20 December 2022 Pic-Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament





Outside the Scottish Parliament on 21 December 2022.