

**From:** PER Minister  
**Sent:** 03 February 2015 17:27  
**To:** jillian.vanturnhout@oireachtas.ie  
**Subject:** REPLY

**An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe**  
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3 February 2015

Senator ~~Jillian Van Turnhout~~  
Leader of the Independent Group  
(Taoiseach's Nominees)  
[Jillian.VanTurnhout@Oireachtas.ie](mailto:Jillian.VanTurnhout@Oireachtas.ie)

Dear Jillian

Thank you for your email of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 which raises an important issue as we move to a more transparent lobbying regime.

Firstly, regarding your proposed amendment to Section 9 of the Regulation of Lobby Bill 2014 I am happy to clarify that registering on the website will have no impact on a person's application for, entitlement to or consideration of any matter referred to in in section 5(9)(c). The Bill is not intended to discourage communications on any of those issues. I am happy to clarify this matter in the House during the Committee Stage of the Bill. I will give this matter some further careful consideration in advance of the Committee Stage debate but my initial feeling is that an amendment along the lines proposed is probably not required to the Bill itself.

However, your proposed amendment raises the important issue of the cultural change which must accompany this legislation if it is to be successful. We must collectively strive to change the prevailing view of lobbying in a democracy as unwelcome. As I have continuously said in furthering this legislation, I firmly believe that lobbying is both a positive and a necessary activity to ensure good decision making by Government and the public service.

The intention of the Bill is not to change current behaviour or in any way to dissuade the regular and ongoing communications between Government and its citizens. The objective of this Bill is merely to shine a light on those communications. By so doing, I would hope to normalise those communications and let everyone see the degree of access, and I hope the equality of access, which business, civil society, NGOs and others have to both our politicians and the highest levels of our

public administration. This in turn assists with better informed policy and better decision making based on input from a variety of stakeholders.

I would in the course of the forthcoming debate very much welcome your thoughts as to how we might work together to bring about this change of culture and change of thinking so that lobbying and advocacy, removed from the secrecy of the past, would be regarded as an essential activity and a sign of healthy engagement by our citizens in democratic decision making .

Yours sincerely

Brendan Howlin TD  
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform