



HOUSE OF LORDS

Procedure Committee

2nd Report of Session 2015–16

Ballot for oral question slots during recesses
Tabling oral questions
Introduction of private members' bills

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The Procedure Committee

The Select Committee on Procedure of the House is appointed each session to consider any proposals for alterations in the procedure of the House that may arise from time to time, and whether the standing orders require to be amended.

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2ND REPORT FROM THE PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Ballot for oral questions slots during recesses

1. In December 2015 the House agreed a pilot for allocating oral questions by ballot during the Christmas, February half-term and Easter recesses.¹ We undertook to review the results of the pilot before the summer recess. The pilot has come to an end but there are now two further short recesses before the summer recess (which had not been announced when the pilot was agreed). Statistics collected to date suggest that increasing use has been made of the ballot over the course of the pilot period. We consider that it would be helpful for the review if the pilot was extended to cover the forthcoming Whitsun recess and June adjournment. Notices and information sheets, including the dates and timings for each ballot, would be made available to members on the same basis as they were during the pilot. We will undertake a full review of the pilot before the start of the summer recess in 2016.
2. **We recommend that the pilot for allocating oral questions by ballot during recesses is extended to run from the first day of the forthcoming Whitsun recess until the House returns from the June adjournment.**

Tabling oral questions

3. Members are currently limited to tabling seven oral questions in each year running from 1 May to 30 April.² Where other limits exist on how many times a member may table certain business they apply to each session.³ It is only the limit on oral questions which applies to a period other than a session. Now that it is normal that each session lasts approximately one year, we propose an amendment to the rules on oral questions such that the limit of seven applies to each session. If in future there is a particularly long session, we would expect to address various consequences of that, including the limit of seven oral questions per session.
4. **We recommend that, with effect from the start of session 2016–17, the limit of seven oral questions per member should apply to each session rather than from 1 May to 30 April.**

Introduction of private members' bills

5. In 2014 the House agreed to introduce a ballot to determine the order in which private members' bills are introduced in a new session.⁴ In order to enter the ballot members submit the final text of their bills to the Public Bill Office before the rise of the House on the day of State Opening. The ballot then takes place after the rise of the House on that day. We have approved a minor change to this timetable so that the ballot is held on the day following State Opening, not on the day of State Opening. This will give the Public Bill Office a few more hours to make sure that all bills are in order before going into the ballot. It will have the knock-on effect that the first private members' bills will be introduced two sitting days after State Opening, not one sitting day after State Opening. The deadline for entering the ballot remains the rise of the House on the day of State Opening.
6. Words to this effect will be included in the relevant section of the next edition of the *Companion*. We report this to the House for information.

1 Procedure Committee, *1st Report of Session 2015–16* (HL Paper 62), agreed on 16 December 2015.
2 Procedure Committee, *2nd Report of Session 2013–14* (HL Paper 33), agreed on 25 July 2013.
3 Topical oral questions, topical questions for short debate and balloted debates.
4 Procedure Committee, *3rd Report of Session 2013–14* (HL Paper 63), agreed on 9 January 2014.