

Sample Letter to Assembly Candidate

[Your name]

[Your organisation]

[Your address]

Dear [Candidate],

I am writing to you to express my request that if elected, you will work to progress a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

I am a voter in the constituency in which you are running and feel very strongly about this issue. I believe a Bill of Rights is the foundation stone needed for building a better future for everyone in Northern Ireland.

A Bill of Rights is a constitutional document that many countries throughout the world have to protect their citizens in a variety of different ways. Northern Ireland has its own unique history as such we need a specific Bill of Rights to address the unique realities of our society.

A strong and inclusive Bill of Rights would provide us with a framework of basic rights that each citizen in Northern Ireland is entitled to, and a mechanism of redress if these rights are not being met. It would benefit everyone equally and would go a long way in helping those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

I strongly believe that such a Bill of Rights should contain social and economic rights, which would deliver such tangible benefit to people here. Education, housing, standards of living and health are all no doubt issues that you deal with every day as an elected politician. Rather than taking away your vital role as the distributor of finite government resources, we believe that your ability to prioritise the defence of the vulnerable and marginalised in society will be strengthened by the introduction of specific social and economic rights of this nature within a Bill of Rights, guaranteeing that government policies and new legislation are compliant with the human rights standards laid down in the Bill of Rights.

There is clear support for a Bill of Rights across all communities in Northern Ireland. In response to the UK government consultation last year on the issue an overwhelming 95% of the 36,492 submission received called for a strong Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Additionally, the Human Rights Consortium has conducted regular polling which consistently shows cross-community support upwards of 80% (last polling conducted July 2010). The Human Rights Consortium is a membership organisation made up of 155 civic society organisations from all communities and backgrounds, representing hundreds of thousands of people, who all call for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. With this clear mandate from all sections of society, I am calling on you show support for this important piece of our peace process that has yet to be delivered.

I am aware that ultimately legislation for a Bill of Rights will be developed through Westminster; however on numerous occasions recently the Northern Ireland Office Ministers have stated that progress at a Westminster level without political consensus from Northern Ireland politicians is difficult. Therefore it is vital that Northern Ireland politicians listen to the people they represent and do everything in their power to make their call for a Bill of Rights a reality. I implore you to do this if the people in this constituency entrust you to represent them.

I also ask you to advocate for a strong Bill of Rights within your party and push for a process that will bring all parties together to reach consensus on this issue; leading to the legislation of this crucial constitutional document which can play a key role in the creation of a better, more just, inclusive and shared Northern Ireland.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,