

Dear

Votes for Life

I am writing to ask you to hold the Government to its promises concerning votes for life for British citizens living overseas. With the advent of the UK's departure from the EU it is more important than ever that British citizens living abroad should be able to make their voices heard.

On 7 October 2016 the Government published a policy statement promising to remove the 15-year rule and give all eligible British citizens who have lived in the UK a lifelong right to vote in Parliamentary elections. A promise to introduce votes for life was also included in the Conservative Party manifestos for the 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019 General Elections. The Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19 was intended to implement this commitment, but it ground to a halt in the report stage in March last year. The Government has said that it remains committed to ending the 15-year limit.

This issue is now even more critical on a personal level for the British citizens directly concerned and for the preservation of democracy itself. Many British citizens who find themselves in this situation still retain strong links with the UK, have close family ties and property and pay taxes in the UK. Their pension and healthcare rights are often dependent on the UK Government, while Britain's trade and foreign policies can have a direct impact on their rights and economic wellbeing in their host countries. It seems utterly wrong and undemocratic to deny them voting rights.

The removal of EU citizenship means many British people now have no vote at all, anywhere, at local, national or European level. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives." Many democracies allow overseas citizens the right to vote and even have dedicated constituencies and representatives for them. Surely the Mother of Parliaments should do the same?

The introduction of votes for life for overseas citizens is now urgent and should be introduced before the next general election. I am asking you to commit to raising the issue with the government, in order to expedite a new Overseas Electors Bill.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely

Add your full name and current address here, and include your former postcode as confirmation that you are/were a constituent. Perhaps add a sentence about your personal situation, e.g. I was unable to vote in the referendum, recent election, or I have just voted in my last election, unless the manifesto promise is fulfilled very soon. Also perhaps talk about your political affiliations e.g. I was a Tory voter for 30 years, but I will not be voting for the Conservatives again, if you/they fail to keep their promise to restore my democratic voting rights.