

SEANAD NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020

LABOUR

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Welcome to the Summer 2020 Newsletter from Senator Ivana Bacik. I was honoured to have been re-elected in March 2020 to represent Dublin University. I will make sure to keep you up to date with the work that I am doing as a Senator. In the meantime, as we navigate our way through this terrible COVID-19 pandemic, I hope that you and all close to you are well and staying safe.

Dear Graduate,

Welcome to my Summer 2020 Newsletter, which provides you with an update on some of the work I have been doing over the past Seanad term 2016-20, and my priorities for the coming term. We all know it's going to be a very difficult time for the country, with the global COVID-19 pandemic affecting countries everywhere. The most important priority for all of us at this time is to support the national public health effort. I will do all I can to help with this, as I know we all will.

For a more detailed look at my work, you can find full coverage on my website (including videos and written transcripts of my contributions in the Seanad). I am very grateful for all the support I have received from Trinity graduates over the years. Do keep in touch on ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie – and thanks again for your support.

Stay safe.

Ivana



Handing in my nomination papers for the 2020 Seanad Elections in Trinity College.



With Speaker Nancy Pelosi at her visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas as part of Dáil100, April 2019

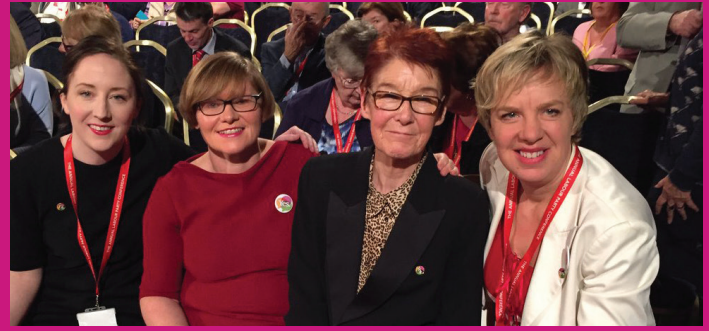


Pictured with other members of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, and International trade unionists, at a meeting on the Colombian Peace Process, 11 July 2019

I am delighted to invite graduates to join me online and I would encourage people to get involved! I update my website and social media regularly so that you can keep up with the work that I am doing. For more on my work as a Senator, see www.ivanabacik.com

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

I am proud to have campaigned for over 30 years for Repeal of the Eighth Amendment and to have secured the introduction of gender quota laws to increase the number of women in politics. In 2018, I chaired the Vótáil100 Oireachtas Committee celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage; am on the Executive of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus and in 2019 received the Irish Women Lawyers Association 'Woman Lawyer of the Year' award. Over the coming Seanad term, I will work to ensure that women's rights are secured through the public health crisis, in particular through strengthening of protections against domestic violence; and through the passage of safe access zone laws for women seeking abortion services.



With national Together for Yes spokespersons Grainne Griffin, Orla O'Connor and Ailbhe Smyth, November 2018



GENDER PAY GAP LEGISLATION

– I introduced our Labour gender pay gap bill in 2017; it subsequently passed all stages and is now before the Dáil where it passed Second Stage on 3 October 2018.

My bill would require all companies with 50 or more staff to publish anonymised data showing pay levels and gender breakdown in their organisations, in order to see if a gender pay gap exists. The bill would then empower the Human Rights and Equality Commission to take action against companies which pay men more than women.

Overall, women in Ireland earn on average 14% less than men. Laws that require wage transparency have reduced the gap between the earnings of women and men in other countries. The outgoing government introduced their own legislation to tackle the gender pay gap – I will work with the incoming government to ensure that we have effective laws in place to deal with this vital equality issue.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

– I introduced the Competition (Amendment) Act 2017, which provides collective bargaining rights to vulnerable self-employed workers like freelance journalists, actors and musicians. My bill prohibiting discrimination against LGBT teachers and hospital workers became law in 2015. I will continue to work hard to secure the rights of workers over the coming term, particularly in the context of the terrible unemployment rates that we are seeing as a result of COVID-19.

CLIMATE ACTION

– I brought forward the first Climate Protection private members' bill in 2007 and served on the board of Friends of the Earth when it was first set up in Ireland. As a committed cyclist, I chair the Oireachtas All-Party Cyclists group which works with the Dublin Cycling Campaign in promoting greater safety and improved infrastructure for cyclists. I will continue to work for greater investment in cycling infrastructure, and on environmental policies to tackle the climate crisis.

EQUALITY

– I have campaigned tirelessly for marriage equality; for equality in education; recognition of Traveller ethnicity and the rights of migrant communities and persons with disabilities. I pioneered the establishment of a multi-denominational school in my area, and my bills to legalise Humanist weddings, prohibit Female Genital Mutilation and ensure pension equality for same-sex couples, have all become law.

I authored a ground-breaking 2013 report on Penal Reform, have led on changes to prostitution law, and have had substantial input into justice-related law reform. I will continue to push for greater equality and to ensure that new laws required to deal with COVID-19 do not impact adversely on the most disadvantaged in our society.

WOMEN'S CAUCUS

– Over the previous Seanad term, I was proud to serve on the Executive of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus (chaired by Catherine Martin TD), established in 2016. Among other achievements, we held a very successful international conference of women's caucuses in Dublin Castle in September 2018, attended by women parliamentarians from across the world.

In March 2019, we put forward a cross-party motion in both Dáil and Seanad on Period Poverty, drawing attention to the very serious implications of period poverty for girls and women, both in Ireland and internationally.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

– I have been very active in my role as Labour representative on the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs. As party spokesperson for International Human Rights, I have continued to raise the ongoing conflict in Syria at every opportunity.

Over the past term, among other things, our Committee heard representatives from Oxfam who spoke on the world's worst humanitarian crisis, in Yemen. We also heard from trade unionists in Colombia on the enormous challenges they face there.

At recent meetings, I have also raised human rights concerns about Bahrain and China. I am also a long-time supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people, and have been an active supporter of the Occupied Territories Bill (2018). I will work with others in the Seanad over the coming term to ensure it becomes law.