



SEANAD ÉIREANN

LEARNING OUTCOME

Seanad Éireann is not directly elected by the people and this lesson explains the differences between the two Houses.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

This is the main chamber of Seanad Éireann or the Senate. Seanad Éireann works in a similar way to Dáil Éireann but with some differences. Each sitting of the Seanad is governed by an Order Paper, which is prepared under the direction of its Cathaoirleach or Chairperson.

The Order Paper lists the business which will be carried out by the House.

The Dáil and the Seanad have matching powers in certain areas. For example, the removal from office of the President, a judge of the Supreme Court or the High Court and the Controller (Comptroller) and Auditor General. They can also declare and terminate a state of emergency.

Both Houses can also make laws and annulments of Statutory Instruments. These are the legal powers that are given to Ministers. However, Seanad Éireann does have prior or exclusive powers in two areas. It can shorten the length of time that the President has to sign a Bill into law. This is called “earlier signature motion”. It can also petition the President to refuse to sign a Bill until the people have decided the matter by referendum. However, this kind of petition requires the support of a majority of the Seanad and not less than one third of the Dáil.

MORE INFORMATION ON SEANAD ÉIREANN

Seanad Éireann is not directly elected by the people and it has less power than Dáil Éireann. There are 60 members of Seanad Éireann.

43 members are elected by outgoing TDs and Senators and members of county councils and city councils.

11 members are directly nominated by the Taoiseach. They are not elected.

6 members of the Seanad are elected by the graduates of the National University of Ireland (which includes UCD, UCC, UCG and Maynooth) and the graduates of Dublin University (Trinity College). Seanad Éireann also elects a member to chair its proceedings. This position is known as Cathaoirleach and the Cathaoirleach performs a similar role as the Ceann Comhairle performs in Dáil Éireann.

Seanad Éireann also studies, debates and passes legislation. Seanad Éireann can change proposed legislation during a debate, but that change has to be supported by Dáil Éireann. Seanad Éireann also has less power in relation to Government spending than Dáil Éireann does.

Seanad Éireann also debates important issues of the day, however Senators do not have the facility to put questions to Ministers.



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Legislation & The Houses of The Oireachtas

New laws have to be passed by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. This process ensures that proposals are examined in detail before they become law. A proposed law is known as a Bill as it goes through Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. When a Bill passes both Houses and is signed into law by the President it is then known as an Act. Proposed laws go through five stages in both Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

- It approves the spending of public money
- It studies, debates and approves new law