

# SEANAD NEWSLETTER

[www.ivanabacik.com](http://www.ivanabacik.com)

Email: [ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie](mailto:ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie)  
T: +353 1 618 3136



Welcome to the latest Newsletter from Senator Ivana Bacik. I am delighted and honoured to have been elected for the first time in 2007 as an Independent Senator to represent the Dublin University constituency in Seanad Éireann. I hope to represent you effectively as a Senator. I will also make sure to keep you up to date with the work that I am doing in the Seanad, and would be happy to raise issues there on your behalf.

Please contact me on:  
[ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie](mailto:ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie) or 01 – 618 3136.

I am very grateful to have been elected to represent the graduates of Dublin University (Trinity College and the Dublin Institute of Technology) in Seanad Éireann. The Senate or Seanad is made up of 60 Senators, six of whom are elected by university graduates, eleven appointed by the Taoiseach and the remaining 43 elected by TDs, Senators and Councillors. There is a widespread consensus about the need for Seanad reform, and I support current proposals to make the Seanad structures more democratic.

However, despite the need for structural reform, as the Upper House in our parliamentary system the Seanad can and does play an important role in the legislative process. It can also be used as a valuable platform for launching social reforms and raising political issues that would not otherwise get public attention.

This is a vital function of the Seanad. Although there is a widespread view that the 'liberal agenda' has been achieved, much more must still be done to ensure that the necessary social changes are made to improve the lives of disadvantaged communities and individuals in Irish society.

The Seanad is the ideal forum for promotion of a radical and progressive social agenda for this decade

and beyond. I will be working hard to promote this agenda in the Seanad, and would really appreciate your support in this endeavour.

As a Senator, I am campaigning on issues such as the right to legal recognition for gay couples, childcare rights, abortion rights, the right to paid paternity leave, educational equality, criminal justice and penal policy reforms and the strengthening of environmental protections. I have been appointed as a member of the Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, and in that capacity am working on a range of campaigns.

Since the Seanad began sitting in September 2007, I have already put forward a number of important and radical initiatives.

In October 2007, I launched a Climate Protection Bill, which would bind the Government to making 3% cuts in carbon emissions every year between now and 2050. This Bill was backed by many environmental and development NGOs. For more information, see the Friends of the Earth website ([www.foe.ie](http://www.foe.ie)) or [www.ivanabacik.com](http://www.ivanabacik.com).

In June 2008, I supported the Lisbon Treaty referendum, on the basis that its adoption would have brought the Charter of Fundamental Rights into force; and would have allowed the entry of other states into the EU.

Other issues I have raised include a call for the separation of church and state, and the extension of multi-denominational schooling; the introduction of paid paternity leave; extension of universal child benefit payments to children of asylum-seekers; an alternative approach to drugs regulation and prison policy; an end to the advertising of alcoholic drinks on children's sports jerseys; and an increase in the representation of women in politics.

I would be glad to raise any issues for you in the Seanad – just email me on [ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie](mailto:ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie).

Best wishes,



Ivana with John Hume and Maurice Hayes at the 2008 Burren Law School, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, May 2008.

# CLIMATE PROTECTION BILL 2007

Together with Friends of the Earth (FoE), I have been working to ensure that practical steps are taken towards addressing the enormous challenge of global warming or climate change.

A vital practical step is the introduction of strong legislation to underpin the Government's stated commitment to tackling climate change.

With the support of environmental and development NGOs within the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, I drafted a Climate Protection Bill which places an enforceable duty upon the Government to make cuts every year in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Bill sets an ongoing statutory goal of reducing emissions by at least 3% per year from 2010 onwards; and a long-term goal of reducing emissions by at least 60% in 2050.

On 3rd October 2007 I introduced the Climate Protection Bill 2007 as a Private Member's Bill in the Seanad. A lively two-hour debate took place, at the end of which the debate was adjourned. Further debate is due to take place on the Bill this year.

The campaign for legislation on climate change continues. It is up to all of us to seize this opportunity and demonstrate Ireland's commitment to doing its fair share to prevent climate chaos.

You will see further information on the debate about the Bill on the Oireachtas website ([www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie)). If you would like to support the campaign for the Bill, please go to [stopclimatechaos.ie](http://stopclimatechaos.ie) or [www.foe.ie](http://www.foe.ie)

## RADICAL CHANGE NEEDED ON PRISON POLICY – AND WOMEN'S IMPRISONMENT

On 22nd May 2008, together with Mary O'Rourke TD, I hosted a briefing session for women members of the Oireachtas with Baroness Jean Corston, a British Labour peer and author of the Corston Report (2007) on Women in Prison, which called for a radical change in the treatment of women offenders, recommending that women's prisons should be closed. Jean Corston and I also spoke at a seminar hosted by the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, advocating alternatives to imprisonment for women offenders.

I have always campaigned for prison reform and am highly critical of the over-use of imprisonment generally. I have recently been active in opposing the development of the new 'super-prison' at Thornton Hall. However, I believe that the case against prison is particularly strong for the most vulnerable groups; juveniles and women offenders. Because the vast majority of women prisoners have not been convicted of crimes of violence, and are 'damaged' rather than 'damaging', community sanctions would be more appropriate penalties for them. Prison should truly be an option of last resort – we should work towards rehabilitation not incarceration.



Ivana arriving at Leinster House with her new daughter Louie Alice, February 2008  
Photo: Tom Burke, courtesy of *Irish Independent*

## Burren Law School 2008

A conference on law and politics that I directed was held in May 2008 in Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, with the theme of 'East meets West – a clash of cultures?'. Speakers at the conference included John Hume, Lara Marlowe, EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy, John Fingleton of the Office of Fair Trading UK, John O'Shea of GOAL, Maurice Hayes, Conor O'Clery, Judge Roderick Murphy and Mary Banotti.

Highlights of the conference included John Hume's moving presentation drawing on his key role in the Northern Ireland peace process; the opening speech by Commissioner Charlie McCreevy on the importance of economic links between the EU, Russia and the Far East; *Irish Times* correspondent Lara Marlowe's discussion of the conflict between law and religion in Islamic countries, in which she focused on the ban on religious political parties in Turkey; the talk by Quentin Peel, International Editor of the *Financial Times*, about the need for the EU to continue its expansion eastwards; John O'Shea's critique of Western Governments' aid policies; and Conor O'Clery's lively account of his own experiences working as a western journalist in China.

For more information, see the website of the Burren Law School 2008: [www.burrenlawschool.org](http://www.burrenlawschool.org).

## Law School 2008 - A Clash of Cultures ?



Ivana with EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy and Dr. John Fingleton, Burren Law School, May 2008.

## NEWS FROM TRINITY

### Trinity Launches iTunes U site

In June 2008, Trinity College became the first university in Ireland and one of the first in Europe to launch its own iTunes U site, featuring free access to audio and video files on course materials, public lectures and presentations, and highlights of College life. This initiative will greatly enhance the teaching and learning experience at Trinity.

### Trinity Achieves High Ranking

In the Times Higher Education Supplement world university ranking released November 2007, Trinity College was ranked 53rd in the world and 13th in Europe. This is the highest ranking the College has ever achieved, up 25 places on last year's world ranking of 78. Trinity is the only Irish university to make it into the top 100 world universities.

### Update on Re-Structuring

The structure of academic departments at Trinity College has recently changed with the move in January 2008 from a five Faculty structure to three Faculties. The three new super-Faculties, into which all schools and departments have been subsumed, are: (1) Arts, Humanities and Social Science; (2) Health Sciences; and (3) Engineering, Mathematics and Science. Further developments on re-structuring are awaited during 2008.

### Dublin University LGBT Society Turns 25!

Last year marked the twenty-fifth birthday of the Dublin University LGBT Society. As Honorary President of the Society, I am delighted to wish the committee and members a very happy birthday and a great year ahead!

### Trinity Association Annual Dinner

On 16th May 2008, I was honoured to have been invited to address the Trinity Association Annual Dinner in the College Dining Hall. My presentation focused on the changing role of women in Irish society. The many distinguished guests included Provost Dr. John Hegarty; Dr. Mary Henry; William Devlin MA (1972) of the N. Ireland TCD Association; Gavin Lloyd MA (1964), Chair of the Oxford Branch; Michael McCann MA (1976), Secretary of the Kildare Branch; and Mary Morrissey MSc (1986), President of the Dublin University Women Graduates Association (DUWGA).



Ivana with Mary Morrissey, President of the DUWGA, Trinity Association Dinner, 16th May 2008.



Ivana with Mary O'Rourke TD, Baroness Jean Corston and other women Oireachtas members outside Leinster House, 22nd May 2008.  
Photo: Tom Burke, courtesy of *Irish Independent*

## Issues Raised in the Seanad

Since my election, the Motions I have raised on the Seanad Order Paper include:

### Rescue of Ingrid Betancourt

I strongly welcome the rescue of Ingrid Betancourt, the human rights campaigner who had been detained by FARC guerrillas in Colombia since 2002. I had been campaigning to highlight awareness about her case for some time. In December 2007 I was successful in getting a cross-party motion adopted by the Seanad, calling for the release of Ingrid Betancourt and all other hostages held by FARC. The great news of her rescue in July 2008 has been a tremendous relief to all of us who had worked on her case.

### Conservation of Marine Environment

On 25th October 2007, I put a Motion before the Seanad calling for Government Regulations allowing dredging for cockles in Waterford Estuary to be revoked. The Regulations allowed fishing boats to conduct dredging for cockles in Waterford Estuary, a protected conservation area, within certain time periods. The marine conservation organisation, Coastwatch Ireland, had found that enormous damage was being done to the seabed as a result of large boats dredging up great quantities of cockles, in breach of the EU Habitats Directive. In other EU countries, cockle fishing is only allowed by hand. After I had brought this issue to its attention, the Government introduced new Regulations (November 2007) prohibiting any dredging for cockles in the Waterford Estuary. A small but significant result for marine conservation!

### Alcohol Advertising on Children's Football Jerseys

On 19th March, 2008, in the Seanad, I raised the continued sale in Ireland of replica children's jerseys for English football clubs carrying the names of alcohol brands. Shirts or jerseys in the name of clubs like Liverpool FC are on sale in children's sizes in sports shops all over Ireland, bearing logos for well-known beers. These jerseys continue to be sold in Ireland, despite the fact that they are no longer available in Britain since 1st January 2008, when a new rule was adopted there forbidding replica sports kits in children's sizes from carrying sponsors' names, where the sponsor is an alcoholic drink company. I held up a Liverpool FC jersey for a 9-10 year old bearing the logo of a well-known beer in the Seanad, and called on the Minister for Health to take urgent action to ensure that the sale of such jerseys is ended in Ireland. This got a good deal of publicity and I am continuing to put pressure on the Minister on this issue.

### Primary Education

I have placed a motion before the Seanad calling on the Minister for Education to explore urgently how best the management of the primary education system may be structured to ensure equality of access to national school places for all children, irrespective of their religious denomination.

### Female Genital Mutilation

I have placed a motion before the Seanad calling upon the Government to bring forward legislation specifically criminalising the practice of female genital mutilation.

Please contact me if you are interested in having any Motions raised on other issues!

# Press Reports

## Details sought on developer options for prison project

SEANAD REPORT

JIMMY WALSH

IF THE preferred bidder selected for the Thornton Hall prison project did not meet the necessary requirements, there were other options that could be pursued, Minister of State for Justice **Conor Lenihan** told the House.

Mr Lenihan was speaking on a motion to pave the way for the construction of the major prison complex in North Dublin.

Fine Gael Justice spokesman **Eugene Regan** said the preferred bidder was the McNamara Group, which had withdrawn from a number of public-private partnership projects with Dublin

City Council. "I just wonder if there is a Plan B? The Minister has stated that if it does not go ahead with this developer, other options can be pursued.

"I wonder what are those other options."

**Ivana Bacik** (Ind) said she was concerned about the size of the proposed jail. Mr Lenihan had spoken of 1,400 prisoners, but the motion up to 2,200. Mr Lenihan said the extra capacity could be obtained by dividing the planned over-sized cells.

**Dan Boyle** (GP), deputy government leader in the House, said the fact the tendering process had delivered a company that was under a critical eye raised questions about the process and the contracting that followed from it.

*Irish Times*  
30th May 2008

vened "to put on the record" that the chair always endeavoured to ensure that the House respected the independence of the tribunals.

★★★★

If marriage allowances and inheritance tax provisions available to heterosexual couples were extended to civil partnerships for gay couples, it would abrogate the responsibility to uphold the Constitution in regard to the protection of marriage, **Jim Walsh** (FF) said.

Mr Walsh was speaking after Minister for Justice **Brian Lenihan** told the House that the scheme of a Civil Partnership Bill would be brought forward by the end of next month.

The Minister was speaking in

*Irish Times*  
30th March 2008

the debate on a motion from independent members **David Norris**, **Ivana Bacik** and **Joe O'Toole** urging the Government to introduce full equality under the law for gay citizens of Ireland, including access to civil marriage.

A Government amendment, carried by 26 votes to 22, asked the House to support the proposals for civil partnership.

In reply to Mr Walsh, **David Norris** said: "Darling, I pay taxes, too. If they exempted fairies from paying tax I would almost forget about the marriage bit. Okay, get rid of income tax for gay people and you're on. But until you do that, Senator Walsh, I am not taking any guff from you."

Madam, - I write to congratulate **Lara Marlowe** on her powerful article about the continued detention of Colombian politician and human rights activist **Ingrid Betancourt**, who has been held in captivity in appalling conditions for over five years by Farc guerrillas. She was kidnapped by Farc while campaigning as a presidential candidate in 2002 because she believed in basic democratic rights. Others took a different view and resorted to violence and intimidation to silence her. She has paid a high price for her belief in democracy.

Having heard a passionate plea for her release made by her daughter, and broadcast on BBC radio 4 in September, I raised the issue of Ms Betancourt's detention in the Seanad with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on September 26th and was assured that the Irish Government strongly supports all diplomatic attempts to secure her release. With renewed international interest in this issue, we should do everything we can to urge the Government and the EU to take all necessary steps to bring about the release of Ms. Betancourt, and the release of other hostages held by Farc in Colombia. - Yours, etc,

**IVANA BACIK**,  
Seanad Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Dublin 2.

*Irish Times*  
10th December 2007

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The urgent need to legislate for paid paternity leave had been highlighted by a comprehensive survey, the results of which had been published in Wednesday's edition of *The Irish Times*, **Ivana Bacik** (Ind) said. A large number of women had been surveyed and among the more alarming findings was that only 33 per cent of them had partners who regularly participated in housework.

"Obviously, men require some gentle encouragement, at least, to participate in domestic work," Ms Bacik observed.

*Irish Times*  
28th September 2007

## Conference on women and ambition in the workplace held at TCD

Senator **Ivana Bacik** and Professor **John Hegarty**, provost of TCD, opened the event on Thursday, 27 March. Senator Bacik was also a keynote speaker at the conference.

*Irish Times*  
30th March 2008

## Seanad report

JIMMY WALSH

The extreme comments and language used by a clergyman in criticising lawmakers over the absence of abortion legislation was not helpful and did not create the calm atmosphere necessary for consideration of this issue, **Labhras Ó Murchú** (FF) said.

Mr Ó Murchú was reacting to calls from Trinity members **Ivana Bacik** and **David Norris** for a debate on the need for legislation to provide for the circum-

stances in which abortion might be carried out. He said in a recent survey, 75 per cent of respondents were opposed to abortion. One had only to look at letters to newspapers to find the comments had not created a calm mood.

Ms Bacik said this topic was of ongoing concern, particularly to the women of Ireland, but it had been ignored by politicians. Recent governments had failed to legislate for abortion, in particular to legislate for the circumstances in which abortion might be carried out in line with the X case judgment in the Supreme Court, where continuation of a pregnancy posed a real

risk to the life of a pregnant woman. Last week, a senior Church of Ireland bishop criticised politicians, justifiably, for failing to face up to this issue, added Ms Bacik. Mr Norris said he believed they had betrayed people by long-fingering this debate. "I think it is significant that a senior Anglican cleric has really reproached us legislators for our lack of courage," he said.

*Irish Times*  
11th October 2007

★★★★  
There was a need for a Tallaght strategy on how we dealt with the challenges posed by climate change, **Dan Boyle** (GP) said.

He was responding to the Climate Protection Bill introduced by new Trinity member **Ivana Bacik**, who said that nothing in the proposed measure was not already Government policy. However she believed legislation was essential.

"Only a statutory commitment backed by sanctions can commit not only this Government but also future governments to follow emission-reductions strategies."

Mr Boyle said he hoped that the Bill would pass second stage. It was something that his party could support. However, the wording in the Programme for Government called for cross-party agreement in this area. The issue of climate change and global warming needed a Tallaght strategy.

Replying to the debate, Ms Bacik said a little over two years ago, in relation to this very issue, the Green Party had described **Fianna Fáil** as "a huddle of gangsters spending taxpayers' money in a carbon casino, plotting the most conniving scams to dodge even the woefully-inadequate Kyoto targets".

Judging by what Minister **Gormley** was now saying, relationships had improved somewhat since then. "However, the need for a legally-binding mechanism to enforce our commitments regarding carbon reduction has not changed. It is still an imperative regardless of the new political dispensation."

*Irish Times*  
4th October 2007

**Ivana Bacik** (Ind) said calls for mandatory drug testing in schools, hospitals, universities and the Oireachtas could not be taken seriously. That would be far too great an encroachment on the civil rights of all of them. This sort of knee-jerk reaction was not the way to tackle the drugs problem.

*Irish Times*  
12th December 2007

## Report on stem cell research

Madam, - The recommendation by the Irish Council for Bioethics that legislation should be passed to regulate the conduct of embryonic stem cell research in Ireland deserves widespread support. Unfortunately, Senator **John Hanáin** chooses to criticise this recommendation on ideological grounds (Opinion & Analysis, April '04th).

In a week when the High Court has had to intervene to allow life-saving blood transfusions for anaemic twins whose parents opposed it on religious grounds, we might reflect on the phenomenon of religious opposition to potentially life-saving treatments. When medical research holds out hope for those suffering from medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, its development would clearly be in the public good.

To oppose such research on religious or ideological grounds is not fair on patients or their families. By far the more humane approach is to recommend, as the Bioethics Council has done, that this research be conducted in a regulated manner, within a rational legal framework. - Yours, etc,

*Irish Times*  
28th April 2008

## Seanad report

JIMMY WALSH

**Eoghan Harris**, a nominee of the Taoiseach, caused problems for Seanad administrators when it was found that he had voted for and against the Government on whether yesterday's business schedule should be changed.

**Ivana Bacik** (Ind) wanted an emergency debate with a view to having cockle fishing regulations amended. When this was opposed by the Government side, she called for a vote.

Mr Harris, who sits as an Independent, initially voted with the Government, but shortly afterwards he also went in to the Opposition lobby. He later explained that he had done so absent-mindedly.

The Government won the vote, but when Mr Harris's double vote

came to light, the voting tellers were summoned to a meeting with Seanad clerk **Deirdre Lane**, and Ms Bacik accepted that Mr Harris had unwittingly sided with the Opposition.

The result was amended accordingly.

*Irish Times*  
26th October 2007

Minister for European Affairs **Dick Roche** said he agreed with **Ivana Bacik** (Ind) that there was a need for a greater involvement of women in the debate. "There is, and I don't understand it, a reluctance and a concern, particularly among women, and it shows in all of the polls, that needs to be addressed by women engaging in the debate."

Mr Roche, who said that he had read the entire treaty, told the House that 95-96 per cent of the treaty was based on what had been in the constitutional treaty.

Ms Bacik said she thought that the treaty deserved support because of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The charter contained many socio-economic rights, such as the right to health-care, which deserved support and which were not in our Constitution at present.

**Fergal Quinn** (Ind) said he

this country as part of a defence pact involving a mutual protection arrangement with our European colleagues.

**Dan Boyle** (GP), deputy Government leader in the House, said there was still a lot of uncertainty about the outcome of the referendum campaign. A large group of voters had yet to make up their minds. People were wavering between a Yes and a No vote because of the uncertainty created by those in the Opposition camp.

**Eugene Regan** (FG) said he had been subjected by the British press in Ireland to a barrage of criticism in respect of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular in the *Sunday Times*, by representatives of a UK-based organisation, Open Europe, which was apparently linked to the UK Independence Party. "I accept the right to free press. However, we should know from where these viewpoints are

*Irish Times*  
6th May 2008

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