

SEANAD CAMPAIGN 2007

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Welcome to the Spring 2007 newsletter from Ivana Bacik, candidate for the Dublin University (Trinity College) panel in the Seanad elections! The elections for the Seanad will be held in Summer 2007 - they are held after a General Election, and within 90 days from the dissolution of the Dáil.

As you are a Dublin University graduate and Irish citizen, you are eligible to vote in this election. You will be sent a postal ballot form once the election has been announced. Thus it is vital to ensure BOTH that you are registered to vote, and that you are registered at the correct address – for details see below.

IVANA BACIK – THE CANDIDATE

I will be contesting the 2007 Seanad election as an independent candidate. I graduated with an LL.B. from Trinity in 1989, was President of the Students' Union from 1989-90. I am now lecturing in the Law School and practising as a barrister.

I was the Honorary Secretary of the Law Alumni Association for several years (1996-2003). During that time, colleagues and I pioneered the Law School Scholarships Scheme, a ground-breaking scheme providing funded places for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study Law.

I have been a College Tutor for several years and was elected a Fellow of the College in 2005. In 2006 I was presented with a Provost's Teaching Award. I am also Registrar of the Law School. Apart from my work in Trinity, I have a long track record of campaigning on human rights and on civil liberties, for social justice and equality for women; for gay rights,

for people with disabilities, for the environment (I am a director of Friends of the Earth Ireland) and for social justice. I have published widely on human rights law, criminal law and criminology, and equality issues.

Recently, I wrote *Kicking and Screaming: Dragging Ireland into the Twenty-First Century* (O'Brien Press, 2004), in which I set forward an agenda for progressive change in Ireland. I believe that the Seanad provides a vital platform for making that change.

You will see further details about my work to date, and my election campaign, at www.ivanabacik.com.

I would really welcome any views or comments you have in the lead into the election. Please contact me by phone or email.

Regards,



Ivana receives a Provost's Teaching Award from Provost Prof. John Hegarty, May 2006.

REGISTER TO VOTE

Turnout in the Seanad elections is always low – in the last elections in 2002, only one-third of those on the Dublin University register cast their ballots. Your vote counts! I have already organised an internet based campaign (on www.ireland.com) to ensure that everyone who is entitled to vote gets registered, and that those who are already registered are listed as being at the right address and can use their vote.

To ensure that you are entitled to vote, you can download a registration form in pdf from the Trinity website (http://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Lecturer/apse/apsepdf/apseclm.pdf), and return it by post to the address below. If you are already registered, but have changed address, then you can email your change of address to: alumni@tcd.ie or proctor@tcd.ie

You may also contact the Alumni / Proctors' / Seanad Electoral Office at the following address:

House No.5,
Front Square,
Trinity College,
Dublin 2.

Opening times for general enquiries are:
10.00 am - 12.30 pm and 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm,
Monday - Friday.

Telephone:
+353 1 896 1448 / 896 1218 / 896 2744
Fax:
+353 1 671 6476

A new register will come into force on 1st June 2007. The final date for registering your vote, if you are not already on the existing register, is on 26th February 2007.

If you know other graduates not already registered—then make sure they are on the new register!

TCD MIX-UP MEANS FEWER SEANAD ELECTORS

It has recently come to light that Trinity College failed to register 742 of the approximately two thousand voters who were entitled to be added to the register that came into force on 1st June last. It means that at present there are 742 people - mostly 2005 graduates - who, through no fault of their own, have been effectively denied their right to vote.

I was the person who first brought this matter to public attention in the Irish Times on 12th October 2006. On 19th October 2006 I wrote to Minister Dick Roche asking him to use his ministerial powers to restore the 742 people to the register.

This would have provided the simplest route to ensure that all those entitled to vote are on the current electoral register. But Minister Roche responded to me on 24th November, saying that he was not in a position to do anything about this.

Over recent months, we have had to endure increasingly pompous lectures from this Minister regarding his concern for the electoral process in general and the compilation of the electoral register in particular.

This is one issue where the Minister could have taken immediate action to ensure that those entitled to vote in this particular election have the opportunity to exercise their franchise. Instead he chose to do nothing, simply saying that 'a Seanad general election is unlikely to be held before July 2007, at which stage the new register will be in force.'

**THE MESSAGE IS
- MAKE SURE
YOU ARE ON THE
NEW REGISTER!**



Ivana and fellow campaigners calling for a 'No' vote in the Citizenship Referendum, June 2004.

COLLEGE RE-STRUCTURING

Trinity has re-structured! You might find it hard to recognise your old college now - all academic departments have been replaced by 'Schools' and 'Vice-Deaneries'. After two years of intensive wrangling, there are 22 new Schools and two 'Vice-Deaneries'. Ten Schools have formed from two or more disciplines (eg the School of Drama, Film and Music), and twelve are from one discipline only (eg the Law School).

These 24 academic units will now be divided up again into three new faculties;

- (1) Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences;
- (2) Engineering and Science; and
- (3) Health Sciences.

Re-structuring has been highly controversial. It comes at a time when the emphasis within third-level institutions is increasingly upon greater efficiency. While some of this change is justified, the danger is that Universities should not embrace managerialism at the expense of academic freedom.

I have been active in resisting unwelcome aspects of the new structures and will continue to campaign for maintenance of high academic standards in Trinity.



Ivana speaking at a British Council debate on Britain and Ireland with John Bowman and Liz O'Donnell, TD. September 2006.

NEWS IN BRIEF

After years of delays, the new Trinity Sports Centre is finally due to open in mid 2007 – with a climbing wall, massage rooms and a 25 metre swimming pool! Membership will be open to graduates – contact sport@tcd.ie.

In December 2006, Trinity awarded Honorary Degrees to film director Neil Jordan and also to Jean O'Hara, known to many graduates as the Administrator of the Alumni and Seanad Electoral Office for many years. Jean has officially retired, so very best wishes to her.

A pioneering interdisciplinary degree in Irish Studies was launched by Trinity, also in December 2006.

The Times Higher Education Supplement has recently ranked Trinity 78th overall in the world university ranking, and Trinity Arts and Humanities came 39th in the international scale. This gives Trinity the highest-ever Irish ranking position in this league – a great achievement.

Dublin University graduates from the DIT will be interested to know that plans are at an advanced stage to move all the DIT colleges – currently spread over 30 different sites – onto a new 65 acre campus at Grangegorman.

Finally, a tribute to Peter Fitzgerald, who sadly passed away in Nov 2006. Peter graduated from Trinity in 1991, was President of the Students' Union (1991-92) and my Election Agent in previous Seanad campaigns. Greatly missed by us all.



Dick Sping gives Ivana some campaigning tips.

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY – CRITICISMS AND PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

The current Government has proclaimed its commitment to a knowledge based economy and the virtues of postgraduate research and 'fourth level' education—the new catchphrase.

But its commitment must be questioned. It has enforced a series of cutbacks in current and capital funding for third-level education, especially at undergraduate level, between 2002 and 2005.

The Department of Education has only recently started to recognise that its predictions for third level student numbers are dangerously outdated. While there has been some reduction in the total number of students undertaking the Leaving Certificate in the last decade, this trend will be reversed, due to an increased birth-rate, the return of Irish emigrants and considerable net immigration. These factors will all drive up demand for third level education again. The current Government's policy of under

funding third level education is already indefensible: in these circumstances it is also likely to be disastrous.

On a more positive note, greater State funding for research has been provided, but the level of funding (especially in the Arts and Social Sciences) remains seriously inadequate. Unfortunately, undergraduate teaching is increasingly being relegated to second place.

I believe that increased public investment in higher education is a worthwhile commitment and a basic requirement for the development of a knowledge-based economy: we cannot afford to leave the financing of colleges to the private sector or individual philanthropists.

I propose that effective planning to expand the resources of third level institutions should begin now – with a strong commitment to teaching and learning, as well as research.

ACTING DEGREE COURSE SUSPENDED!

One of the first casualties of the Trinity re-structuring programme may well be the world renowned undergraduate degree course in acting studies.

Trinity was the only institution offering a degree level acting course in Ireland and there is a real fear that young acting talent may now be forced to study abroad.

The course has been in existence for over a decade and graduates include Ruth Negga, Derbhle Crotty, Pauline Hutton and Jason Barry.

The announcement that the degree course will cease next Autumn has caused dismay in Trinity and beyond, with the Arts Council and the director

of the Abbey Theatre among those expressing their concern at the news.

I sincerely hope that this myopic decision will be reversed. Trinity authorities state that the decision to close the course was made on financial grounds. However the School of Drama, Film and Music cannot necessarily be expected to attract outside investment like other Schools in the College.

The fate of every course in Trinity cannot be decided by a narrow 'balance-sheet' approach to education. The graduates of the Degree in Acting Studies have contributed enormously to Irish theatre and culture. I wonder where that achievement is accounted for in the decision to end the course?



Ivana speaks at a Mayday Rally.

No stranger to election campaigns, Ivana campaigning in the European Parliament election June 2004.

WHAT I STAND FOR

RETHINKING CRIMINAL JUSTICE: TACKLING THE REAL CAUSES OF CRIME

As a practising criminal lawyer, I believe passionately in the need for a radical overhaul of the criminal justice system. I believe that public policy on crime should not be based on quick-fix 'solutions'. Instead, the real economic and social causes of crime must be tackled, through an effective and coherent long-term policy that does not trample on our hard-won civil liberties. I will work for the following changes:

- A coherent sentencing policy based on the principles of rehabilitation of offenders and reparation/restorative justice for victims with less reliance on prison.
- Better resourcing of the probation service and of community based sanctions.
- Greater development of the Drugs Court project for rehabilitation of heroin addicts.

SEANAD REFORM

Many of the Dublin University Senators have traditionally used the Seanad as a forum for the expression of progressive and radical views.

The role of an upper chamber can be an important one within the legislative process, but to be more effective, reform of the Seanad is needed. Among the main reforms I propose are:

- Abolition of the Taoiseach's power to nominate Senators without election.
- Expansion of the electorate for the University panels to include other third-level institutions.
- Reform of the Seanad electoral process to remove party political patronage and give citizens a real voice.

QUALITY AND CHOICE IN EDUCATION

I have campaigned within IFUT (the Irish Federation of University Teachers) for improved quality in education, by opposing the increasing use by many colleges and schools of temporary and short-term contracts for teaching staff. I will also continue to argue for:

- Better resourcing of the primary sector in particular.
- The provision of greater choice in education, through an educational system which caters for those of all religions and of none.
- Furthering diversity among the student body through the development and strengthening of affirmative action programmes for college entry.

RADICALISING SOCIAL POLICY

Real change is needed in environmental, employment, housing, and transport policies to bring about meaningful improvement in people's lives. Among my priorities are:

- A major social housing programme for the 60,000 families awaiting Council housing and affordable housing for first-time buyers.
- Legal rights and protections for the 150,000 tenants in private rented accommodation and a commitment to abolish homelessness.
- Investment in better public transport, policies discouraging the use of SUVs and a commitment to bicycle-friendly transport systems.
- Enhanced provision for workplace leave, including extended paid parental leave.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Although much has been done to improve women's position in Irish society, women are still not full and equal participants at all levels. I have a long track record of campaigning as a feminist to ensure greater gender equality. I will work for:

- Provision of decent, affordable and well-regulated childcare facilities with State support.
- Greater access to, choice in and availability of contraceptive services.
- Legalisation of abortion as part of a comprehensive policy to provide full reproductive health services to all women and men



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IVANA WANTS TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS!

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