

**P-04-661 Prohibit Online Use and Electronic Voting by Assembly Members in the Senedd Chamber. Correspondence – Petitioner to the Committee 06.01.16**

It is good to see the reply from Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler on the matter of the petition prohibiting Assembly members from using the internet during Senedd sessions.

I would disagree with her conclusions and remind all that Scotland and Northern Ireland already have similar prohibitions in place and Parliament members in Westminster usually pay full attention to discussions taking place in the House of Commons. I believe it would be acceptable for members to use mobile electronic devices for taking notes and storing information etc but that internet use and the focus on the large personal computers Assembly member currently have is taken away. I can't remember the number of times I have been with colleagues in the public gallery watching proceedings in the Senedd chamber who have been disillusioned and dismayed seeing our public representatives checking facebook updates and surfing the internet whilst very important issues affecting Wales are being discussed in the chamber. This is simply unacceptable.

I would like to repeat that it is of concern that the use of the internet during Senedd debates could diminish the integrity of Welsh political debate and legislation. Debating sessions should hold the full attention of Assembly Members at all times. If Assembly Members are not fully paying attention to Senedd debates, how can they be properly relied upon to be looking out for the interests of the people they represent?

Voting should also be done using a show of hands, orally or by a paper ballot or registration to ensure full transparency. Technology and the internet are a great aid in administration and research but should not be relied upon or allowed to influence the democratic process and healthy robust political debate in general.