



Youth Work Ireland

Press Release
24 October 2011
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Leading Youth Organisation Welcomes Candidates Commitments on Reducing Age to Run for President

Youth Work Ireland today welcomed commitments from the three leading candidates in the Presidential election that they support the reduction in the age to be a candidate for the office of President. Independent Sean Gallagher, Michael D Higgins of Labour and Sinn Fein candidate Martin Mc Guinness have all written to the organisation to confirm their support for such a change. The organisation emphasised, as did the candidates, that in office the President would not have the power to make such a change or even advocate for it but it stated that commitments by the candidates were significant in the run up to a constitutional convention next year where this issue will inevitably be looked at. Youth Work Ireland believes that the age to be a candidate for all public offices should be the same as that for voting in elections, currently 18.

"It is quite unbelievable that a massively discriminatory provision like this is present at the heart of our Constitution relating to the highest office in the land. At a time when we hear a lot about young people being the future of the country it seems high time that the abolition of the 35 year old qualification for the office of President was introduced. The current provision excludes 1.2m of our citizens from eligibility and would for example rule out some very senior figures in politics like Leo Varadkar, Lucinda Creighton and Pearse Doherty purely on the basis of age! It is most welcome that the candidates for the position have agreed that such a change is necessary" said Michael Mc Loughlin of Youth Work Ireland

"There are a number of fine candidates offering for the office. It is clear there is a desire amongst the public to have people from beyond traditional politics as candidates. If there is to be a broader selection of candidates from the worlds of Sport, Business and the Arts it will be crucial to remove this discriminatory provision." Mc Loughlin added

ENDS

325 words

Contact: Michael Mc Loughlin 01-8584500

Dear Patrick,

Many thanks for your letter. As a former youth and community worker I am very supportive of involving young people in public life. I set up my first youth club Foróige in Ballyhaise in 1979 because there were no youth services for local young people. I also set up a local branch of Macra na Feirme in 1980. I have continued to encourage young people to get involved in their communities with public action and activity.

As a professional youth and community worker I saw first-hand the importance of involving young people in the decisions that can affect their lives. My on-going support of and involvement with Foróige and my role on the Board of Young Social Innovators Ireland leaves me convinced of the potential contribution of young people.

Notwithstanding the constitutional limits of the Office of Presidency, I would support a lowering of the age whereby people could contest the Presidency. While it is important that people should have life experience to contribute to the office, it is not conceivable that someone younger than 35 would not have a positive contribution to make. We all have our strengths and I believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate fully in public life.

With warmest regards,

Seán Gallagher

Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your query to the Michael D Higgins regarding the age of eligibility to contest for the Presidency of Ireland. Throughout the campaign Michael D has made clear his view that the age should be reduced and has suggested that this could be best achieved through the proposed Constitutional Convention to be established early next year.

Dermot Lacey
Michael D. Higgins Campaign

Patrick a chara,

Thank you for your email.

Martin greatly values the contribution young people make to Irish society and believes they should be nurtured and encouraged by politicians and civic leaders. He has pledged to put a youth representative on the Council of State if elected. He is also in agreement with yourself on the issue of the age to contest elections. If a person is old enough to vote they should be old enough to run for office.

Go raibh maith agat.

Le meas,
Martin McGuinness for President Campaign