

COPE 72



11<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority  
Steel House  
11 Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9LH

info@ipsa.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir,

I am currently an Urban Community Councillor for my local area for which there are no expenses available for me to claim. I would like to share my views with you on the reform of the expenses system for MPs.

I believe that the proposals laid out by Sir Christopher Kelly in response to the irresponsible behaviour of some MPs over expenses go too far. The potential sacking of spouses because they are married to their employer is the proposal that causes me the greatest concern. Business people, doctors and the clergy all often employ their spouses. It makes just as much sense for politicians and their spouses to work in a team in a similar way. MPs are never off duty and often neither are their spouses. The spouse of an MP, almost by definition, will have a shared commitment to the constituents and an understanding of the issues. Therefore, they are especially well suited to being employed in a role to support their spouse in their work. Working in this way may also help to support their family life, which can be especially challenging for MPs.

Executing the policy fairly will be very difficult. Will it apply to those who are living together and not married? If an MP marries his secretary or PA would he/she then have to sack him or her? Either, it will result in unacceptable prying into the private lives of MPs or it will discriminate against those who get married. It is especially unfair for those MPs and their spouses who currently work together in this way. However, whilst I fully accept that there should be sensible safeguards to ensure that the opportunity to employ family members is not abused, out of principle, I believe that MPs should continue to be able to employ their spouses into the future.

Of course there should be measures to stop the many abuses of the system that we have recently seen. However, the anticipated proposed measures are a step of interference too far. How can we expect our MPs to govern us with justice, compassion and understanding if we treat them like this? Surely we want our MPs to come from a wide range of backgrounds rather than allowing the role of MP being the preserve of the rich, as it once was?

Yours sincerely

Katherine (known as Kitty) Sams