



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Minister calls for step change in overseas voter registration.**

The fourfold increase in overseas voter registration between the 2010 and 2015 elections was welcome but not nearly enough said Constitutional Affairs Minister, John Penrose.

Speaking at the annual conference of Conservatives Abroad the Minister told delegates that overseas voter registration had increased from 1% of eligible voters in 2010 to just 3% in 2015. He suggested that in 2020 the numbers must be much higher so that as many eligible voters as possible take part in the next General Election.

The Queen's Speech included the Votes For Life Bill which removes the voting ban on British expats who have lived abroad for over 15 years. It is estimated that this will add over 1.5 million eligible voters to the current 3 million expats currently believed to be eligible to vote.

"We believe that every British adult has a constitutional right to vote in general elections no matter where they live or how long they have lived outside the UK" Mr Penrose said.

Previous Conservative attempts to abolish the 15 year rule during the last Parliament were blocked by the Labour and Liberal Democrats. "We expect there to be many Parliamentary hurdles to cross" the Minister said "but the Government is determined to restore the democratic rights of all British expat voters".

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, who was one of the leaders of the campaign to abolish the 15 year rule, said "I was delighted to raise the issue of Votes for Life with the Prime Minister in the last Parliament and convince him to include a commitment to abolish the 15-year rule in the 2015 Conservative General Election Manifesto. Now we have a Conservative Majority Government I am pleased that the Prime Minister has delivered on this manifesto commitment to include the Votes For Life Bill in the first session of this parliament. I urge all parties to support the introduction of the voting rights of British citizens wherever they live in the World".

Contact – Paul Barnes, +33 6 79 67 06 64 or [pauldavoutbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:pauldavoutbarnes@gmail.com)