



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brits Living Overseas Treated like “Second-Class UK Citizens”, Warns Gina Miller on Launch of True & Fair’s Overseas Arm

- **True & Fair Party calls for the introduction of Minister for British Abroad to look after the interests of six million UK citizens**
- **Government has failed to set out a timetable or details for the introduction of ‘votes for life’ for UK citizens living abroad under the Elections Act**
- **The lack of a plan risks “disenfranchising millions” at the next general election**
- **True & Fair Abroad launched today to make a “unique, comprehensive offer” to Brits who represent the country everyday of their lives overseas**

11 AUGUST 2022: Brits living abroad should have a dedicated government minister to look after their interests, Gina Miller has argued while launching the overseas arm of the True & Fair Party.

The Minister for British Abroad would represent the interests of six million British citizens and passport holders living in other countries. The minister would handle issues British citizens encounter when travelling and living abroad for extensive periods of time. They would be supported by citizens co-opted as business, trade and cultural ambassadors, providing consular communities for Brits who need support in other countries.

The post would also mean there is pressure within government to constantly maintain focus on citizens’ interests abroad. For example, recent provisions under the Elections Act 2022, which should see up to 3.5 million Brits allowed to vote in UK general elections, have drifted under this Government.

Since 2015, the Conservatives have advocated the removal of the 15-year limit on overseas voter registration, so that all eligible British adults living abroad could vote for the rest of their lives. The current rule is a major deterrent to voting, with only 107,000 registrants as of December 2021.

Provisions for this change were included in the Elections Act but requires secondary legislation to be enacted. The government has failed to set out a timetable for when this will happen. As a consequence, millions of British citizens abroad risk not being able to register to vote at the next general election. This could take place within months, because the new prime minister will be able to call a general election at their convenience following the scrapping of the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act.

The grave electoral inequality Brits abroad have faced has been exasperated by qualifying Commonwealth citizens of British Crown dependencies and overseas territories - as well as citizens of Cyprus and Malta - being eligible to register to vote in all UK-held elections. Even citizens of Fiji and Zimbabwe retain their voting rights, even though the countries have been suspended from the Commonwealth.

True & Fair Party leader Gina Miller said:

“One of the main goals of this party is to tackle democratic deficits wherever they exist. There is no starker deficit than the one faced by our six million overseas citizens. They need to be treated with the same fairness and equity that citizens of 93 other countries enjoy – the right to vote when living abroad. As British passport holders they also deserve a minister and support network to represent their interests.



"It is appalling that our citizens have no idea when they will be allowed to vote in UK elections. The Government should have set out a clear and detailed timetable, but ministers simply aren't interested in our own people when they have left these shores.

"Those citizens make us proud, because – knowingly or unknowingly – they represent the UK in neighbouring countries, trading partners and places we love to visit every single day. Their rights should be respected, not neglected. The Government should enact this secondary legislation as soon as Parliament returns from recess. We cannot risk an embattled new Conservative leader undermining our citizens' democratic rights by disenfranchising millions in a snap general election. They are not second-class UK citizens and should not be treated as such."

Paul Fisher from True & Fair Abroad added:

"A Minister for British Abroad is vital because the post provides real weight for dealing with issues our citizens face when living and working overseas. This is particularly important in Europe and in countries with sizable British communities, such as New Zealand, Australia and Commonwealth states. By straddling the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for International Trade, the minister would have the breadth of civil service expertise they would need to fulfil the role.

"Many other leading nations have systems in place so that their citizens who live abroad are democratically represented. It is a risk to our international status to not provide our citizens with similar rights. True & Fair Abroad is making a unique, comprehensive offer to Brits living overseas - and we will fight for their rights."

Contact for media enquiries and requests for interview

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Notes to editors:

True & Fair Abroad's policies include:

- The introduction of a new ministerial post to represent the interests of circa 6 million British citizens/passport holders living abroad to remedy a profound democratic deficit; includes a programme to develop consular communities as cultural and business/trade ambassadors.
- Lobby the Government to bring forward the secondary legislation to implement the Elections Act 2022 which, amongst other matters, abolishes the 15-year cap on the voting rights of British citizens living abroad.
- Back calls for a Citizens' Assembly on dedicated constituency representation for overseas voters in the Westminster Parliament.
- Negotiate access to the European Schengen Information System.
- Having a grown-up conversation with the EU about a closer, mutually beneficial relationship.

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