

## Arklow solicitor is Society's nominee for Seanad panel

The Law Society has nominated Deirdre Burke for election to the Cultural and Educational Panel of Seanad Éireann. The Arklow-based solicitor was one of six candidates – all solicitors – seeking the Society's nomination.

The written submissions of the six candidates were carefully considered by the participating members of the Society's Coordination Committee. It applied the criteria for selection as indicated by the Society's Council at its meeting on 4 March 2016.

After considerable agonising, due to the impressive achievements and outstanding qualities of the candidates, Burke was chosen. The committee wished her every success with her campaign.

Running as an independent, Burke says she is honoured to have received the nomination: "I intend to use both my election campaign and – if elected – my Seanad seat as platforms to promote the changes needed in government policy and the law to enhance and protect children's rights and the rights of families."

She added: "I've spent my life as a parent and a solicitor working to support and empower children, families and communities, and promoting the principle of social justice. I am increasingly concerned by the lack of investment in key services – and by the increasing challenges posed to our profession in delivering adequate and effective services to the public."



Deirdre Burke

Her priorities for the Seanad include:

- Further reform of the family and child law system, with more resources being allocated to cut

- court waiting times,
- Better child protection, including greater investment in the Child and Family Agency and in out-of-hours services, as well as secure placement centres,
- Investment in child and youth mental health services,
- Countrywide refuge accommodation and access to adequate counselling for parents and children affected by domestic violence,
- Equality for children with disabilities and full implementation of the *Education of Persons with Special Needs Act*,
- The elimination of child poverty and homelessness,
- A referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment, with

- respectful, compassionate and informed debate, in tandem with new legislation,
- Countrywide access to courts, with adequate resourcing of the courts system,
- A review of the Legal Aid Board due to concerns about its effectiveness in serving the public to its potential, and the provision of additional resources.

As a candidate on both the NUI Panel and the Cultural and Educational Panel, Burke is asking NUI-graduate practitioners to support her in the NUI Panel election, and she urges members to lobby their local representatives to give her their vote for the Cultural and Educational Panel.

## Also running: Linda O'Shea Farren

Solicitor Linda O'Shea Farren is also running for election to the Seanad – on the Industrial and Commercial Panel. "As a solicitor, I will be happy to highlight your issues at a national level, if elected," she says.

The field is particularly crowded on that panel, with 37 candidates running for nine seats. Those allowed to vote consist entirely of elected representatives, including incoming TDs, outgoing senators, and councillors. With so many



candidates competing for an extremely limited pool of voters, this panel has been dubbed the

'panel of death'.

Linda would appreciate all offers of help from practitioners by approaching public representatives they know, of all political hues and none. "In a Seanad election, one single, very low-preference vote transferred in a late count can make the difference between being elected and not. So, if you can approach even one public representative on my behalf, this could prompt that number one or a preference vote."

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