



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL UK

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Press Release

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NEW STANDARDS FOR MPs' EXPENSES: CLAMPDOWN OR COP OUT?

The much-vaunted clampdown on MPs' expenses, announced this week as part of the Parliamentary Standards Bill, is nothing of the sort according to anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International UK.

In a statement issued today, TI-UK points out that the proposed new penalty on MPs for providing false or misleading information on a claim for an allowance - one year in jail - is significantly more lenient than existing laws covering fraud and false accounting.

The statement says:

Transparency International UK is deeply concerned about the apparent discrepancy between the penalty that is proposed (1 year in jail) and existing offences under the Fraud Act 2006 (10 years jail) and Theft Act 1968 (false accounting - 7 years jail).

There are already glaring discrepancies in other areas between penalties MPs impose on themselves and those applied to the general public. For instance, on bribery there is a 2-year jail sentence for bribery in giving honours (Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925). However, for the general public, bribery carries 7 years in jail.

The current laws are already highly likely to cover all but the innocent mistakes of MPs' expense account abuse. This is why Scotland Yard is already investigating some cases.

For MPs to pass a law lowering the penalty on themselves would be a clear abuse of office and further erode public confidence in the UK political system.

Commenting on the discrepancies **Chandrashekar Krishnan, Executive Director of TI-UK**, said:

'It would be scandalous if MPs were to pass a law that would treat them more leniently than the general public.

'The scandal of MPs' expenses must be a catalyst for greater transparency, honesty and independent oversight – not a new opportunity for the powerful to further abuse their position.

'MPs have shown themselves incapable of self-regulation, so it is vital that the Parliamentary Standards Bill is founded on independent recommendations from the forthcoming Kelly report.'

-ENDS-

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Notes to editors

1. More information on discrepancies between penalties for MPs and the general public, see Annex 2 of TI-UK 2006 report: Corruption and Political Financing at [http://www.transparency.org.uk/reports/Corruption&Political_Financing_TI\(UK\)_Paper_12_Oct_06.pdf](http://www.transparency.org.uk/reports/Corruption&Political_Financing_TI(UK)_Paper_12_Oct_06.pdf)

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone whose life, livelihood or happiness depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority.

Transparency International UK is the UK Chapter of the world's leading non-governmental anti-corruption organisation, Transparency International (TI). With more than 90 Chapters worldwide, and an international secretariat in Berlin, TI has unparalleled global understanding and influence.

- We raise awareness about corruption
- We advocate legal and regulatory reform at national and international levels
- We design practical tools for institutions, individuals and companies wishing to combat corruption
- We act as a leading centre of anti-corruption expertise in the UK.