



Pat the Cope Gallagher TD
DONEGAL

Secretary

Sub 16/297

Constituency Commission 2017

Room 165

Custom House

Dublin 1

09/1/2017

Secretary

Please find enclosed my submission to the Constituency Commission 2017 – I make the following submission in relation to the Donegal Constituency. I would be grateful if you would include it for the Commissions considerations on possible boundary changes; I have also forwarded an electronic copy .

Yours Faithfully

Pat the Cope Gallagher.



Pat the Cope Gallagher TD
DONEGAL

Submission to

Constituency Commission 2017

By

Pat the Cope Gallagher T.D.

Gweedore Road

Dungloe

Co. Donegal.

31/12/2016.

Overview

I make the following submission to the Constituency Commission in the firm belief and resolve that the constituency of Donegal should encompass all of the County and people of Donegal – the present situation whereby the southern part of the county (all areas south of Ballintra to the County Leitrim border) forms part of a four county constituency known as Sligo Leitrim, is neither practical, feasible nor right. The citizens of Donegal have a right under the broader terms of this newly established commission to remain as one single entity, in that the county boundary should not be breached – a constituency that includes all the population of Donegal and preserve the county as one single entity.

The case I make will be referenced to the Molloy v's The Minister for the Environment, the terms of the current Commission, the needs and aspirations of the people of south Donegal and the greater county as a whole, the lack of representation due to the unnatural composition of a four county constituency - of which south Donegal is the smallest entity thereof, the total lack of any cohesion and natural historical or geographical linkage between the various parts of the Sligo Leitrim constituency as constituted by the previous Constituency Commission of 2012.

Points of consideration for the Commission.

- Molloy v's The Minister for the Environment – The ruling of this particular case was that – it is not possible for any court, commission or otherwise to set a universal threshold by which all constituency compositions of population can be adjudged on. Therefore the current practice of having a variance between constituencies of in or around 1 to 1.6 % has no basis in law or guidance for any Constituency Commission nor the otherwise utilised standard variance of 5 % as practised by previous Commissions. It is my belief that the Molloy ruling was attempting to accommodate the situations which arise – such as the south Donegal case at present whereby minority areas of larger counties have to be removed from the overall county in order to satisfy a guideline for a Commission – without giving equal consideration to the removal of a geographical area into another constituency which hitherto no natural linkage or bond existed with. The Molloy ruling is attempting to introduce flexibility to avoid situation which are neither desirable nor practical – such as the case of a four county constituency (Sligo – Leitrim – Cavan and Donegal). I submit if the Molloy ruling were to be used by the present Commission then south Donegal would be re united with Donegal (5 seater) constituency, the current population of Donegal is 158,755 as set in the last census, the current population of the Donegal 5 seat constituency is 150,342. Even if the previous standard variance of 5% which was

practiced and used by other Boundary commissions in the past were to be used, then I make the case to include the 7,859 of the Donegal population which were included in Sligo Leitrim constituency in 2012. Accepting the current constituency population to be 150,342 then activating the 5% variance the constituency population would be 157,860 – that then would have Donegal have a Population to TD equal to that of 6 other national constituencies at present and still within the spirit of the Molloy judgement, the previous variance if utilised as a measure and satisfying guideline 2(c) the breaching of county boundaries should be avoided.

- The terms of the current Commission as published, I am now referencing to sections 2 (c) and 2 (e) respectively and specifically quoting - 2(c) the breaching of county boundaries and 2 (e) the need to take on board geographical considerations in deciding upon a constituency boundaries. The breaching of Donegal's county boundary should have been avoided at all costs in the previous Constituency Commission's Report of 2012 and final recommendations which came into effect for the General Election of 2016. The consequences of that decision by the boundary commission – has led to an area being separated from its natural hinterland, it has negatively impacted on the population - in 2016 the separated area from Donegal recorded the lowest General Election turnout in its history – a decline of 15% in turnout and such a decline was completely out of kilter with the surrounding areas. The level of apathy was due to that area of south Donegal being part of a constituency which they had no linkage to or affinity for.
- The aspirations and needs of the population of south Donegal – the current makeup of constituency in which they are presently part of and find themselves in – does not meet nor serve their needs and aspirations. Referring again to the Molloy judgement, I submit that a broader interpretation of that ruling allows for lesser emphasis on universal thresholds of populations and more emphasis on geographical areas and there natural boundaries -that is what the ruling was referring to, the spirit of the ruling was to avoid situations whereby small enclaves would be separated from their overall natural homelands - in order to create constituencies which simply satisfy guidelines and not historical or geographical links. No one can present a logical or sound argument as to why south Donegal or west Cavan must form part of the Sligo Leitrim constituency other than it satisfies the 2011 Boundary Commission guidelines, whilst the guidelines have a purpose and are well intentioned on the part of those who compile and enforce them – they do not factor in human considerations, natural and historical linkages and the long established practices of geographical areas – such as south Donegal. In short it is my view that simple broad-based guidelines without geographical and historical considerations are too blunt an instrument to draw up constituency boundaries.
- The lack of the future prospect of Dail Eireann representation from the immediate area, the further lack of local representation as a direct result of the abolition of Town Councils by the previous Fine Gael led Government has created a situation

whereby political apathy has grown, as demonstrated in the poor turnout in the General Election 2016. As someone who has represented this area when it formed part of Donegal Southwest constituency, I am keenly aware of how politically involved and politically active the people and this area in particular have been historically. In those times they were part of a constituency which they naturally felt at home with, they had natural and historical links with the other parts of the constituency. It is also correct to state that the abolition of the Town Councils in the Town of Bundoran and the Town of Ballyshannon has further eroded the connection between the body politic and the voters of south Donegal.

In conclusion, I make the case for the re unification of the County of Donegal into one single Dail Constituency comprising of the entire county as encompassed by its county boundaries. The current breakup of the population of Donegal has failed, the separated part of the county and its population of South Donegal have not integrated naturally into the newly created four county constituency – it has led to the disenfranchisement of a people from their natural county, it has led to voter apathy and to the creation of a constituency which never historically or geographically had any basis in reality other than to satisfy a departmental guideline at a particular moment in time.

I respectfully request the Commission to consider my points of view and the submission I make to you, I thank you for your time and opportunity to make this submission.

Let's make Donegal one constituency for it is one County.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat the Cope Gallagher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Pat the Cope Gallagher.
31/12/2016