



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01453

Name of petitioner

Caroline Wilson on behalf of The Evening Times & Kidney Research UK (Scotland)

Petition title

Opt for Life

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce an opt-out system of organ donation in Scotland to help save more lives.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Evening Times reporter Caroline Wilson approached the then Health Secretary, Nicola Sturgeon, earlier this year in person about a possible change to an opt-out system.

She replied that the Scottish Government is waiting for the results of the UK-wide organ donation taskforce review which is due to be completed early next year.

We have been in contact with MSPs from across Scotland seeking support for a change in the transplant laws.

A public petition raised by the Evening Times has collected well over 10,000 signatures.

Petition background information

In October 2011 the Evening Times launched a campaign for an opt-out system of organ donation in Scotland.

More than half of MSPs have indicated to us that they would be supportive of a change in the country's transplant laws.

Our campaign, and the opt-out system, is supported by the British Medical Association and leading charities including Kidney Research UK, British Heart Foundation, the Kidney Federation, Diabetes UK and the Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

Dozens of other countries across Europe operate an opt-out system including Belgium and Spain.

Research shows countries which have an opt-out system in place tend to have higher donation rates.

When Belgium switched to an opt-out system of organ donation in 1986, there was an 86% rise in the number of kidneys retrieved for life-saving transplants (Luc Colenbie, head of Belgium's transplant strategy)

Today, only a tiny minority - 1.7% - of the 11million population have said they do not wish to donate organs after death (Luc Colenbie)

Research shows most people support organ donation but the majority are not on the current register - more than 60% in Scotland (Scottish Government figure).

When asked why they are not on the register, most people will say simply haven't got round to it, which suggests the majority are supportive of the idea in principle.

An opt-out system would take the responsibility away from the individual whilst respecting their right to say no.

The BMA and patients' rights group Scotland Patients Association believe an opt-out system would better respect the human rights of the patient.

Currently families may refuse consent for donation when their loved one may have wanted to donate.

Under an opt-out system it would be presumed, if a person had not opted out in their lifetime, they would wish to be a donor. Relatives would be less likely to refuse consent.

Around 400 kidneys are buried or cremated each year. Meanwhile, 3 people die each day in the UK waiting for a kidney transplant.

A 5-year review of organ donation practices in the UK is due to be completed early next year.

A number of targets were set in 2008 including a 50% increase in donor rates in Scotland.

In 2008 the then Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said: "This (target) will be achieved without changing existing law on organ donation.

However, in addition to this, I think it's really important that we consider seriously every potential way of increasing donation rates."

Without changing the law the Scottish Government is not doing everything it can to radically improve donor rates and save more lives.

We believe the public majority in Scotland would wish to save life after death and would be supportive of an opt-out system.

The country already has the highest donor rates in the UK. Scotland's reputation as a progressive nation would be enhanced if an opt-out system was put in place.

Wales is preparing to introduce an opt-out system in 2015, paving the way for Scotland to introduce its own system.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/optforlife>

Related information for petition

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/opinion/in-our-opinion-time-for-holyrood-to-act-and-save-lives.18674420>

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/organ-donation-should-be-mandatory-its-no-good-to-someone-in-a-coffin-i-miss-gail-so-much-day-one-of-our-campaign-to-create>

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/renal-specialist-sue-backs-our-call-for-an-opt-out-system-to-save-more-lives-we-know-90-of-people-say-they-support-organ-do>

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/bobby-almost-died-after-buying-a-kidney-transplant-abroad-but-hes-thinking-of-doing-the-same-again-after-another-7-years-on>

<http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/mobile/news/labour-gives-official-backing-to-our-opt-for-life-campaign.18844004>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

10000

Closing date for collecting signatures online

31 / 10 / 2012

Comments to stimulate online discussion