

**Legislation to allow members of secular bodies  
to perform legal civil marriages is passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas  
– Minister Burton**

The Minister for Joan Burton, T.D. today (Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012) announced that **the Civil Registration (Amendment) Bill 2012** has now passed all stages by both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill which will allow members of secular bodies to perform legal civil marriages, will now be prepared to go to the President, Michael D. Higgins for his approval and signature.

The Civil Registration Act 2004 provides for a register of solemnisers, who may be either registrars employed by the HSE or members of religious bodies, who are authorised under law to solemnise marriages in the State. The purpose of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Bill 2012 was to include a third category of solemniser i.e. members of secular bodies.

Commenting on the Bill, Minister Joan Burton said: **“It is clear that many of our citizens wish to celebrate their commitment to each other through a non-religious marriage ceremony. Out of the 19,828 marriages held in 2011, a total of 5,769 were civil ceremonies. This represents 29% of all marriages that year and compares to a figure of 6% of marriages in 1996.”**

The Bill amends the definitions as contained in section 45 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 to provide for applications from secular bodies, provided they fulfil a set of criteria. In essence, the body must be:-

- an organised group of people;
- have a membership of not fewer than 50 people;
- the principal objects of the body must be secular, ethical and humanist;
- members of the body must meet regularly in relation to their beliefs and in furtherance of the objects;
- any rules of the body regarding marriage must not contravene the law;
- there must be appropriate procedures around the selection, training and accreditation of solemnisers;
- it must be in existence continually for at least 5 years on the date of making an application;
- it must have charitable tax exemption for at least 5 years as evidenced by an entitlement to an exemption under section 207 or 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997;
- it must not have the making of profit as one of its principal objectives; and
- it must maintain a register of its members.

In addition, certain types of organisations are deemed, for the purposes of the Bill, not to be secular bodies. These are Chambers of Commerce, organisations that are political, sporting/athletic, trade union/representative in nature and bodies that promote purposes that are unlawful, are contrary to public policy or morality, in support of terrorism or terrorist activities or for the benefit of an organisation of which membership is unlawful.

Minister Burton concluded by saying: **“The proposal to include members of secular bodies in the register of solemnisers is one I support and I am delighted to have obtained the support of my colleagues in Cabinet for this proposal. Marriage is an important and valuable institution in Ireland. This Bill when enacted enhances the institution of marriage by acknowledging and legislating for people whose beliefs are not religious but rather secular, ethical and humanist and who wish to celebrate their wedding day in a manner that is most meaningful to them.”**

**ENDS**

Note for Editor

A list of bodies who are currently authorised under law to solemnise marriages in the State follows.

## Register of bodies authorised to solemnise marriages include:

<p>Abundant Grace Christian Assembly  Abundant Life Christian Centre  Amish Mennonite Community Ltd  Arann Reformed Baptist Church  Armenian Orthodox Church  Assemblies of God Ireland  Assembly of God Ireland  Association of Independent Christian Churches  Babul-ul-Ilm Society  Baha'i Community  Bantry Christian Fellowship  Baptist Church  Blanchardstown Baptist Church  Bridge Christian Community  Bridgetown Gospel Hall  Buddhist  Calvary Chapel Cork  Calvary Church Wexford  Calvary Cork  Carlow Bible Church  Chinese Gospel Church  Chinese Gospel Church Dublin  Christ Healing Evangelical Church  Christian Brethren  Church of Ireland  Church Of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints  Congregational Union of Ireland  Cootehill Christian Fellowships  Cornerstone Christian Church  Donnybrook Church  Donnybrook Pentecostal Church  Dublin Vineyard Church  Dublin West Community Ch  Dun Laoghaire Evangelical Church  Elim Ministries  Ennis Evangelical Church  Free Presbyterian Church  Gorey Christian Assembly  Grace Christian Fellowship  Grace Fellowship  Great Hope Gospel Ministries  Greek Orthodox Church  Healing Streams Christian Renewal Centre  The Redeemed Christian Church of God  Hillside Evangelical Church  Hope and Glory Christian Ministries  Islamic Community  JC of LDS  Jehovahs Witnesses  Jewish Community  Islamic Community  JC of LDS  Jehovahs Witnesses  Jewish Community  Kingdom Dominion Christian Church Limited  Knocklyon Church of Christ  Lifegate Bible Baptist Church  Life Renewal Ministries International  Listowel Christian Fellowship  Lurganearly Hall  Lutheran Church</p>	<p>Mallow Street Christian Fellowship  Methodist Church  Monaghan Gospel Hall  Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries  Mountain View Community Church  Mullingar Christain Fellowship  Nazarene Community Church  Newbridge Bible Fellowship Church  Newcastle West Bible Fellowship  New Life Inernational Ministries  North Down Christian Fellowship Church  Oratory Society  Order of Marian Apostles  Pagan Federation Ireland  Plumblin Ministries  Presbyterian Church  Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland  Religious Society Of Friends  Riverside Gospel Hall  Roman Catholic Church  Romanian Orthodox Church  Seventh Day Adventist Church  Shanganagh Bible Church (Plymouth Brethern)  Society of St Pius X  Solid Rock Church of God  Soul Winning Pentecostal Ministries  Soul Winning Pentecostal Ministries  South City Church  South Hill Evangelical Church  Spiritualist Union of Ireland  The Association of Independent Christian Churches  The Bride Christian Fellowship  The First Six Principle Baptist Church of Ireland  The Gospel Hall Skibbereen  The Lighthouse Baptist Church  The Oratory Society  The Redeemed Christian Church of God  The Redeemed Evangelical Mission  The Salvation Army  The Society of St. Pius X  Tower of Power International Ministries  Tralee Christian Fellowship Church  Tramore Bible Church  Transfiguration Christian Centre  Trinity Church Network  Unitarian Church  Victory Christian Centre  Victory Christian Church  Victory Outreach  Victory Outreach Church  Word of Victory Church  World Outreach Christian Centre</p>
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