

GRA Threatens Strike Action

The Government plans to enter talks with the Garda Representative Association (GRA) amidst threats by the police force to withdraw their services in industrial action next month.

Under s.59 of the Garda Síochána Act (2005), it is stated

“A person is guilty of an offence if he or she induces, or does any act calculated to induce, any member of the Garda Síochána to withhold his or her services or to commit a breach of discipline.”

However, Gardaí have said that they will withdraw services on four separate days (4, 11, 18 and 25 of November) if an agreement for pay is not met.

A pay deal that included rent allowance for new recruits, backdated increments and an extra 15 hours work per year was rejected last week; this was followed by a ballot on industrial action. The Government have ruled out unilateral pay restoration, as it would mean increased pay for all public sector workers.

According to the Sunday Business Post:

“The GRA has said members are seeking the full restoration of pay cuts implemented since 2008, as well as the reversal of deferred increments and no extra hours.”

Despite the illegality of the proposed industrial action, the Government have yet to take any legal steps to halt such work stoppages.

Abhaile Advice Service Launched

This afternoon, Minister for Social Protection Leo Varadkar TD and An Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald TD will launch a financial and legal advice service called Abhaile.

The service, aimed at those in mortgage distress or struggling with debt, will provide legal advice and support. The service will be independent. Its main goal will be keeping people in their homes. A pilot of the scheme was launched in early 2016, and has seen largely positive results.

Although recent Central Bank figures show that the number of cases of houses in mortgage arrears are steady in decline, many households are still weighed down by massive debt.

A similar scheme was launched in late 2012 by then-Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton TD. However, the number of people who availed of the scheme was incredibly low. By the end of 2014, only 1,207 distressed borrowers had made use of the service.

The scheme will be launched today, Monday 3 October, at 12.30pm; the launch will take place in the Pearse Street Library.

Dáil Debates on “high priority” Sex Crimes Bill to Start

This Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6, the Dáil will discuss the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015. The Bill, which was first published on 23 September 2015, reaches its second stage this week in the upper house.

The Bill gives effect to Directive No. 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011. This directive is aimed at combating instances of child sexual abuse and child pornography. Within, the Bill provides for the collection of evidence in sex crime cases, especially where evidence is being collected from children.

It also lays out stipulations regarding statutory rape, including harsher sentences for adults who participate in sex acts with a minor over whom they have authority.

New measures also protect children from grooming acts, and online predators. Provisions in the Act also criminalise the purchase of sexual services, where previously only the sale of such was criminalised.

This comes shortly after the Minister for Justice Francis Fitzgerald TD showed concern over the increase in sex crimes over the 12 months up until June this year. The increase of 13% was in stark contrast to the drop in crime figures across most of the other categories.

Minister Fitzgerald said,

“It is clear that we as a society cannot tolerate such crimes. More needs to be done and I am determined to meet this challenge head on.”

She also noted that this week’s discussions of the Bill in the Dáil were of high priority.

DSP Refutes Claims Made by Media

Last week, an *Irish Times* article reported that, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General’s report for 2015, that

“the Department of Social Protection estimates the cost of the [Public Service Card] scheme will reach €60 million by the end of 2017”.

The article also reported that the Department

“failed to develop a business case for the rolling out of the Public Service Card and there is no evidence it carried out a comprehensive risk evaluation of the project”.

However, in a statement made on Friday 30 September, the DSP countered this claim. The statement gives the actual figure of the increase. According to the DSP, the cost for the provision of the cards to qualified recipients will increase. For the “Managed Services Contract element of the project” from €24.9m in 2012 to €27.6m at the end of 2017. The scheme, over the course of its running will increase its figure from €55.3m in 2012 to €59.7m at the end of 2017.

The statement denotes that staffing levels were increased from those projected at the planning stage. It also comments that the scheme also yields costs savings in protecting against welfare fraud.

This week at Public Affairs Ireland

On the Blog

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Claire Hogan

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Notes from the Editor

Issue 2 of *The Public Professional* is now available. Members can access it for free through our website. Non-members can buy print or digital versions on a copy-by-copy basis, or through a yearly subscription.

Issue 3 will be available through our subscriber platform on our website. It will be released on Friday 21 October and will include an interview with the Trinity College Dublin team responsible for the development and creation of the new Talent Analytics Lab, and an examination of what exactly Big Data is and how your organisation can use it best.

If you have any questions or comments, you can contact our editor, Shauna, at editor@pai.ie.

This week in Dáil Éireann

Tuesday 04 October

2.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions (FF, SF, LAB, AAA-PBP)

2.32 p.m.
Order of Business
Motion re. Fifth Report of the Committee of Selection (without debate)
Motion re. sittings and business of the Dáil in budget week (without debate)

3.02 p.m.
Taoiseach's Questions

3.47 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Education and Skills

5.17 p.m.
Topical Issues

6.05 p.m.
Government Business:
Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 - (Order for Second Stage and Second Stage (Department of Health)

8.00 p.m.
Private Members Business (Fianna Fáil) - Criminal Justice (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill 2016

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Thursday 06 October

12.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions (FF, SF, I4C, SD-GP)

12.30 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation
Motion re. Houses of the Oireachtas Estimates (without debate)
Motion re. Parental Responsibility in the matter of Child Abduction (Back from Committee without debate) (Department of Justice and Equality)
Motion re. Appointment of member of the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority (Back from Committee without debate) (Department of Justice and Equality)

12.47 p.m.
Weekly divisions

Government Business (will only be taken if full time for weekly divisions not used) Up to 1.30 p.m.
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 - Second Stage (resumed if not previously concluded) (Department of Justice and Equality)

1.30 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Social Protection

3.00 p.m.
Topical Issues

3.48 p.m.
Private Members Bill:
Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland (Amendment) Bill 2014 — Second Stage — Pearse Doherty

5.48 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Wednesday 05 October

12.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions (FF, SF, I4C, RIG)

12.32 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation

12.47 p.m.
Taoiseach's Questions

1.32 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

3.02 p.m.
Topical Issues

3.50 p.m.
SOS

4.30 p.m.
Private Members Business (Sinn Féin): Motion re. Mental Health

6.30 p.m.
Government Business
Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 - Second Stage (resumed if not previously concluded) (Department of Health)
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 - (Seanad) Second Stage (Department of Justice and Equality)

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

This week in Seanad Éireann

Tuesday 04 October

2.30 p.m.
Commencement Matters

3.30 p.m.
Order of Business

Motion regarding the address to the House by Mr Manus Cooney on 5 October, 2016 – without debate

Motion regarding the establishment of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee - without debate

6.00 p.m.
Statements on the European Commission's decision that Ireland provided unlawful State aid to Apple [Department of Finance]

7.15 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns

Wednesday 05 October

10.30 a.m.
Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.
Order of Business

12.45 a.m.
Address to Seanad Éireann by Mr Manus Cooney "The Diaspora, undocumented Irish and Immigration Reform" [Seanad CPP]

3.00 p.m.
Statements on the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union [Minister for Foreign Affairs]

4.30 p.m.
Private Members Business

6.30 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns

Thursday 06 October

10.30 a.m.
Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.
Order of Business
Motion regarding Parental Responsibility in the matter of Child Abduction (Back from Committee without debate)
Motion regarding Appointment of member of the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority (Back from Committee without Debate) [Department of Justice and Equality]

2.00 p.m.
Statements on the Action Plan for Education [Minister for Education]

4.00 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns

This week's Committee Meetings

Tuesday 04 October

Budgetary Oversight
CR3, LH 2000 11 a.m.
AGENDA: Macro-economic forecast for 2017 [Officials from the Department of Finance]

An Ghaeilge, An Ghaeltacht agus na nOileán (Comh)
CR4, LH 2000 5 p.m.
AGENDA: Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 [An Coimisinéir Teanga, Rónán Ó Domhnaill Uasal]

European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 5 p.m.
AGENDA: (i) The work of the General Affairs Council (GAC) including the results of the Bratislava Summit and the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union [Minister of State for European Affairs]
(ii) Election of Vice-Chair

Public Petitions (Joint)
CR1, LH 2000 5 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Thursday 06 October

Social Protection (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: Lone Parents [Officials from the Department of Social Protection]

Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 10 a.m.
AGENDA: Rising costs of motor insurance (resumed) [Mr Cyril Roux, Deputy Governor and Mr Bernard Sheridan, Director of Consumer Protection, Central Bank of Ireland]

Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence (Joint)
CR1, LH 2000 10 a.m.
AGENDA: Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management [Mr. Christos Stylianides, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management]
Dáil Business Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 10.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Public Accounts
CR3, LH 2000 2 p.m.
AGENDA: (i) Business of the Committee; and
(ii) Examination of Comptroller and Auditor General Special Report 94: National Asset Management Agency's sale of Project Eagle (resumed) [Minister for Finance]

Wednesday 05 October

Children and Youth Affairs (Joint)
CR1, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: (i) Session A: 9.00 a.m.
Discussion on the operations of Oberstown Children Detention Centre [Representatives from Oberstown Children Detention Centre]
(ii) Session B: 10.00 a.m.
Mid-Year Review of 2016 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 40 (Children and Youth Affairs) [Minister for Children and Youth Affairs]
(iii) Session C: 11:45 a.m.
Election of Vice-Chairperson

Future of Healthcare (Select)
CR4, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: Session A: 9 a.m.
Inequality and access to healthcare [Dr. Sara Burke, Research Fellow, Centre for Health Policy and Management, TCD]
Session B: 11 a.m.
Citizen centred healthcare [Senators Colette Kelleher, Frances Black and John Dolan, Seanad Civil Engagement Group]

Justice and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: (i) Mid-Year Review of Estimates for Public Services for the Justice and Equality vote group;
(ii) Briefing on the recent UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants;
(iii) Motion re Proposal for a Council Regulation on jurisdiction, the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, and on international child abduction (recast); and
(iv) Motion re Appointment of Member to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority
[Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality]

Transport, Tourism and Sport (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: A vision for public transport including the level of State subvention
Session A: 9 a.m. [Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport];
Session B: 10 a.m. [Representatives from the National Transport Authority, Dublin Bus, Iarnód Éireann and Bus Éireann]

Dáil Reform (Sub)
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 9.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Working Group of Committee Chairmen
CR2, LH 2000 4 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting