



European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill HL Bill 202 of 2017–19

On 5 September 2019, the second reading of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill is scheduled to take place in the House of Lords. Remaining stages are expected to be completed on 6 September 2019.

Summary

- On 4 September 2019, Hilary Benn (Labour MP for Leeds Central) introduced the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill in the House of Commons. The bill is a private member's bill, formally supported by several independent MPs as well as MPs from all opposition parties. The previous day, the House of Commons had agreed to amend the standing orders of the House so that all the bill's stages could be taken in one day. The bill passed its second reading on division by 329 votes to 300.
- The purpose of the bill is to ensure that the UK does not leave the EU on the 31 October 2019 without a withdrawal agreement, unless Parliament approves such a course of action.
- Clause 1 would provide that the Prime Minister must ask the European Council for an extension to article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union unless one of two conditions is met. These conditions are that the House of Commons has approved, and the House of Lords has had the opportunity to debate, either 1) a withdrawal agreement with the EU or 2) a statement that the UK is to leave the EU without an agreement.
- If neither of these conditions is met, subsection 1(4) would require the Prime Minister to send a letter to the President of the European Council requesting an extension to article 50 until 31 January 2020. This letter must be sent no later than 19 October 2019, and the exact form of the request is set out in a schedule to the bill. Subsection 3(1) would oblige the Prime Minister to accept this extension if it is offered. If the European Council offers an extension to a date other than 31 January 2020 the Prime Minister can either accept the European Council's offer or ask the House of Commons whether it accepts the offer.
- Clause 2 would oblige the Government to publish a report by 30 November 2019 explaining what progress it has made in its negotiations with the EU. If the House of Commons rejects or amends the report the Government must publish a second report setting out its plans for further negotiations. From 7 February 2020, the Government would be obliged to publish reports on its progress every 28 days until an agreement is reached with the EU or the House of Commons resolves otherwise.
- Clause 4 would require the Government to make regulations to ensure that the date of exit from the EU is the same in EU and UK law.
- The bill was amended in committee. The amendment, moved by Stephen Kinnock (Labour MP for Aberavon), added a statement to clause 1(4) setting out that the intention of the request for an extension to article 50 was to pass a withdrawal agreement bill. Clause 1(4) as amended further specifies that the withdrawal agreement bill should include provisions reflecting "the outcome of inter-party talks as announced by the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019". A division on the amendment was started. However, as the Noes did not appoint any tellers the

amendment ultimately passed without division.

- The House of Commons also divided on an amendment proposed by Richard Graham (Conservative MP for Gloucester). This amendment would have required the Government to table, by 21 October 2019, a motion in both Houses for a withdrawal agreement to be approved. If such a motion was passed, the Prime Minister would have been required to request an extension as set out in subsection 1(4). The amendment was defeated on division by 495 votes to 65.
- The bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on division by 327 votes to 299.
- Shortly before 1:30am on 5 September 2019, Lord Ashton of Hyde, Government Chief Whip, announced in the House of Lords that a business of the House motion would be tabled later that morning to ensure that the bill completes all its stages in the House of Lords by 5pm on 6 September 2019. The Chief Whip also announced that he had received assurances from the Government Chief Whip in the House of Commons that any amendments made by the Lords would be considered in the House of Commons on 9 September 2019 in order for the bill to receive royal assent that day.

Further Information

- House of Commons Library, '[The Benn-Burt Bill: Another Article 50 Extension?](#)', 4 September 2019

Article by the House of Commons Library explaining the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill as introduced in the House of Commons.

Parliamentary Debate, Statements and Questions

- [Second Reading and remaining stages of the 'European Union \(Withdrawal\) \(No. 6\) Bill'](#), HC Hansard, 4 September 2019, cols 215–90

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