

Icelandic Constitutional Convention, 2011

ICELAND



MUNUC 35

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

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CHAIR LETTER

Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC! I am thrilled to present to you the 2011 Iceland Constitutional Convention! I am excited to lead you through the ups and downs of this modern constitutional convention and the unique social and cultural challenges of the time. I will be your chair for the weekend, so it's about time I properly introduce myself.

My name is Angelysse Madsen, a third year in the College studying psychology, comparative human development, and neuroscience. I am a northern Arizona native but have found my place here in the UChicago community. Outside of my coursework, I plan big events for students in the College, I am a peer mentor for the class of 2026, and am highly involved in the MUNiverse here at UChicago. I am a very goofy, passionate, easy-going person, and am looking forward to getting to know you all!

My favorite aspect of this committee is that it is a modern constitutional convention. When I typically think of "constitutional convention," I think of a bunch of men in powdered wigs in a stuffy, Victorian-style room, with inkwells and quills at the ready. Iceland was the exact opposite of the United States Constitutional Convention as a global, public movement. Led by citizens, for citizens, and with social media, the 2011 Constitutional Convention is truly unique.

I am hopeful that this will be a fun and productive weekend. To ensure this, the dais and all staff members will make sure everyone will be treated with respect. If there is any discriminatory or disrespectful discussion in this committee, I will not hesitate to gavel delegates down or have them pulled aside. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me.

Cheers!

Angelysse Madsen (angelyssemadsen@uchicago.edu)

CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 35! I have all my fingers crossed that by the time you are reading this the world has fully returned to all of its in-person splendor, and we are getting ready to spend the weekend together actually in the flesh (*gasp*). Either way, I am beyond excited to bring 2011 Iceland to life over the course of this weekend as your Crisis Director. It is an incredibly dynamic, rich, and multifaceted corner of history, and I am looking forward to a weekend of lively debate and creative crisis arcs.

And now for the obligatory icebreakers: my name is Anna Guzman and I am a third-year student studying Public Policy and Law, Letters, and Society. Last year, I served as a CD for Daoud Khan's Afghanistan 1973 at ChoMUN XXV and moderated the SOCHUM Committee at MUNUC 34. Engaging with the MUNiverse has been one of the highlights of college for me, and I am so excited to return as an Under Secretary General for ChoMUN XXVI this year.

I grew up in Sacramento, CA, meaning that these past two winters have been my first foray into the unique experience that is Chicago weather. When I am not amusing my friends with my enchantment (and rapid disillusionment) with the snow, I can be found taste-testing copious amounts of tea around Chicago, fueling my obsession with the Supreme Court with a steady diet of podcasts, and getting into "friendly" public policy arguments with my classmates.

I am looking forward to delivering a unique and engaging hybrid experience over the course of the weekend. Iceland in 2011 represents a truly novel moment in the global dialogue surrounding democracy, constitutional structure, and legal legitimacy. Situated at the intersection of social media and constitutional law, we believe this hybrid committee will challenge us all to contemplate the dimensions of democracy, politics, and law in the modern context. Of course, there are certainly many political, economic, and social factors that threaten, shape, and ultimately define this particular moment in Iceland's history - we are looking forward to exploring the ramifications of the

2008 Financial Crisis, the Kitchenware Revolution, and the Left-Green Movement, all of which illuminated the need for systemic change. Given the substantial powers and responsibilities of the Icelandic Constitutional Committee to inform the future of the nation, we are excited to see how you choose to shape this emerging world.

While it surely goes without saying, we recognize that we may encounter some sensitive topics throughout our exploration of 2011 Iceland, and we fully expect these topics to be treated with the respect that they are owed. With that being said, we anticipate a productive and engaging weekend of first-class debate!

In closing, I am very excited to get to see you all at MUNUC 35 come February!

Cheers!

Anna Guzman (annajguzman@uchicago.edu)

HISTORY OF COMMITTEE

Committee Structure and Mechanics

In order to fully explore the character of the constitution drafting process, this committee will be a hybrid! With a more fast-paced and dynamic structure than our counterparts, we anticipate that committee will run quickly and cover a significant amount of ground over the course of the weekend. With that being said, we understand that the nature of a hybrid can take a bit of getting used to, so please feel free to ask questions at any time. As your dais, we are here to guide you through this hybrid process and answer any questions that may arise. Additionally, if you want to clarify any questions before committee starts, feel free to reach out to us by email at annajguzman@uchicago.edu and angelyssemadsen@uchicago.edu.

The 2011 Constitutional Committee was formed in Iceland in response to the disastrous 2008 financial crisis and is widely regarded as one of the most immediately democratic constitutional drafting processes. It was composed of 25 diverse, popularly-elected Icelandic citizens (ranging from farmers, lawyers, students, radio hosts and more) from over 500 candidates. Once elected, these delegates brought their own unique opinions, backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas to the drafting process as you will have to do during the first part of committee.

Our committee will start with two sessions of formal, GA-style debate. The goal of traditional mechanics is to craft and debate a single document. In our case, we will be working over the course of these two sessions to write a new Icelandic constitution! During our two GA sessions, you will have time to give speeches, form blocs, and work together to draft the constitution. These sessions will seek to simulate the time and context of the 2011 Constitutional Committee, meaning we will explore specific topics that were of interest to the delegates in the committee later in this background guide. But, we specifically anticipate seeing discourse about the structure of government, public resources, environmental concerns, the role of the church in government, and the “one person, one vote” principle, among other public policy and political issues.

Once a constitution has been written and passed, we will transition to continuous crisis mechanics for the remaining three committee sessions. Delegates will assume the roles, bios, and portfolio powers of the diverse group of individuals who participated in the drafting process to navigate the aftermath of the convention. Ratifying the new document will require the acquiescence of Alþingi as well as the cooperation of the general Icelandic population. The power of the news, the global legal community, and social media will also play prominent roles. Delegates will need to navigate these social and political challenges both collectively—in the form of short directives passed in response to crisis breaks—as well as individually—through delegate arcs in backroom notes. For more information about crisis mechanics, check out the MUNUC Delegate Training Materials on the website, munuc.org!

The 1944 Constitution of Iceland

The emergence of national consciousness in the Icelandic people was the impetus for the original Icelandic Constitution. The goal of the movement was independence from the Kingdom of Denmark through self-determination.¹ An influx of Danish-educated Icelandic intellectuals who had studied romantic and nationalist ideas helped inspire the Icelandic independence movement. By the middle of the 19th century, discourses of self-determination and sovereignty became dominant within the domestic political and civic dialogues. Encouraged by this social context, the independence movement began to demand increasing degrees of political autonomy.²

These burgeoning intellectual inspirations within Iceland intersected with a concurrent independence movement developed by Jón Sigurðsson, a classic liberal and leader in local Icelandic politics.³ In 1843, a royal decree allowed Alþingi, the national parliament, to be re-established as a national parliament (before this decree, the Alþingi of the Icelandic Commonwealth had a century-long history of judicial integrity in the region but had been abolished in 1800).⁴ With a

¹ Furstenau, Sunna Olafson. "Iceland's Road to Independence." Icelandic Roots. Icelandic Roots, April 26, 2021. <https://www.icelandicroots.com/post/2017/01/20/iceland-s-road-to-independence>.

² Hálfðanarson, Guðmundur. "Social Distinctions and National Unity: On Politics of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Iceland." *History of European Ideas* 21, no. 6 (1995): 763–79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599\(95\)00068-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-6599(95)00068-2).

³ Hallgrímur Sveinsson. "Who was Jón Sigurðsson?" *Vísindavefurinn*, July 9, 2003. Retrieved August 1, 2022. <http://visindavefur.is/svar.php?id=3569>.

⁴ Hálfðanarson, Guðmundur. "Iceland: A Peaceful Secession." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 25, no. 1-2 (2000): 87–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468750050115609>.

new-found legal and legislative mechanism within Alþingi, advocates like Sigurðsson began to peacefully advance demands for Icelandic independence.

Meanwhile, discourses surrounding nationalism and civil rights pervaded in mainland Europe. As a result, liberals and nationalists in Denmark pushed the king to establish a constitutional monarchy and recognize the power of a parliament elected by the people.⁵ However, by repealing the absolute monarchy and allocating power to a legislature, Iceland saw a significant decrease in autonomy. Under the previous governmental structure, Alþingi had a great degree of control over domestic affairs. Now, these matters were under the jurisdiction of the new parliaments of which Icelanders had no influence nor representation.⁶ This threat of a loss of sovereignty significantly accelerated the Icelandic independence movement.

In 1874, nearly a thousand years after first settling within the regional boundaries of Iceland, Denmark granted the Icelandic people partial political autonomy over their land. Though Denmark granted some freedoms, the Danes still maintained some official rule and authority over the region. A new constitution was written for Iceland. This Stjórnarskrá um hin sérstaklegu málefni Íslands ("Constitution on the special issues of Iceland") is widely recognized as the primary foundation for the constitution that is still in place in Iceland today.⁷

However, it wasn't until 1918 that Iceland took another step towards codifying their independence through Sambandslögin or "Union law." The Sambandslögin was signed between Denmark and Iceland, establishing the official Kingdom of Iceland with King Christian X of Denmark still technically functioning as king of both. This Act of Union was an important step towards increased Icelandic autonomy. Iceland established its own flag, elected its own Minister of Icelandic Affairs to govern over Alþingi, and asked Denmark only to represent its foreign and defense interests abroad.⁸

⁵ "The Constitutional Act of Denmark." The Danish Parliament, March 7, 2017.

<https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/democracy/the-constitutional-act-of-denmark>.

⁶ Daly, Ciarán. "From Iceland - Kingdom Come: Inside Iceland's Complicated Relationship with the Danes." The Reykjavik Grapevine, September 8, 2016.

<https://grapevine.is/mag/articles/2016/09/08/kingdom-come-inside-icelands-complicated-relationship-with-the-danes/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Loftsdóttir, Kristin. "Forging of the Icelandic Subject." Essay. In *Crisis and Coloniality at Europe's Margins: Creating Exotic Iceland*. S.I.: ROUTLEDGE, 2020.

The Union Act was negotiated so that it would come up for potential revision in nearly 20 years. The terms of the agreement were such that, should an additional agreement between the two countries not be reached in 1940, Iceland could sever their partnership and would be able to revoke the Act.⁹ Indeed, in the early 1940s, Alþingi approved the cancellation of the Sambandslögin and officially revoked their partnership with Denmark. A vote was held to poll the public opinion of the Icelandic people who were 97% in favor of breaking off the current relationship with Denmark and establishing a constitutional republic in its stead.¹⁰

This overwhelming popularity of severing ties with Denmark was largely informed by the Nazi occupation of Denmark. The occupation of Denmark in April of 1940 led to severed communications between the two nations, and Alþingi voted to take immediate control of their foreign relations in order to declare their neutrality in the war. While many Danes saw Icelandic independence as opportunistic given the circumstances of the occupation, Danish King Christian X congratulated the newly independent nation.

In 1944, the Alþingi met and ratified the new constitution, establishing a new republic. This new constitution was largely a duplicate of the 1874 document that had been in place previously. Many critics of the 1944 constitution argue that it was drawn up in haste 'with minimal adjustment of the 1874 constitution as part of Iceland's declaration of independence from Nazi-occupied Denmark.'¹¹

Since 1944, the constitution has been amended a total of seven times, mostly due to adjustments in voting eligibility and adaptations during the 1991 reorganization of Alþingi to a unicameral system. In addition, the human rights sections of the constitution were extensively reviewed in 1955 (including review of provisions disallowing torture, forced labor, and the death penalty, a requirement of a public trial for anybody accused of a crime, and freedom of speech).¹² However, despite these minor updates, the main body of the text remained virtually identical to the 1944 and

⁹ Hofverberg, Elin. "Centennial of the Danish – Icelandic Union Act of 1918." Centennial of the Danish – Icelandic Union Act of 1918 | In Custodia Legis: Law Librarians of Congress, November 29, 2018.
<https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2018/11/centennial-of-the-danish-icelandic-union-act-of-1918/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gylfason, Thorvaldur. "Democracy on Ice: A Post-Mortem of the Icelandic Constitution." openDemocracy, June 19, 2013.
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/democracy-on-ice-post-mortem-of-icelandic-constitution/>.

¹² "Iceland 1944 (Rev. 2013) Constitution." Constitute. Accessed August 17, 2022.
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iceland_2013?lang=en.

1874 documents that governed the country since its early inception. These critiques were especially salient in light of the push for constitutional reform, as many reformists argued that the country was owed a document that reflected the diversity and modernity of its constituency.

2008–11 Icelandic Financial Crisis

The Icelandic financial crisis was a watershed moment for the development of the economic, political, and social vitality of Iceland which had significant impacts on constitutional reform movements that occurred during the early 2010s. The crisis was caused by the **default** of all three of the country's major privately owned commercial banks at the end of 2008. This systemic banking collapse was catastrophic relative to the size of the Icelandic economy. In fact, it is recognized as the largest banking collapse experienced by any country in economic history and contributed to severe economic devastation from 2008 to 2010.¹³

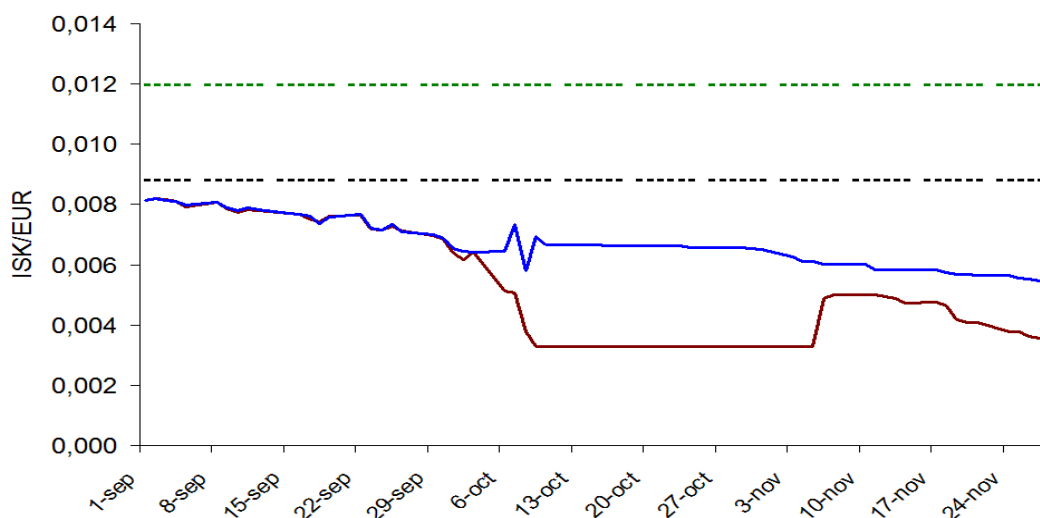


Figure 1: The Exchange Rate for the Icelandic Króna (ISK) as compared to the Euro (EUR) in 2008¹⁴

¹³ "Iceland: Selected Issues." IMF. Accessed July 27, 2022.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2016/12/31/Iceland-Selected-Issues-43997>.

¹⁴ "The Exchange Rate for the Icelandic Króna (ISK) as compared to the Euro (EUR) in 2008." Google image result for https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f5/ISK_exchange_rate_Sep-Nov_2008.png. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://images.app.goo.gl/cb1WqbeDdSnwnPFW8>.

Several causes of the financial crisis have been pinpointed, but a significant contributor was the deregulation of the Icelandic banking system that occurred in 2001.¹⁵ This set the stage for a massive crisis when banks became unable to refinance their debts. This is exactly what happened by March of 2008 when it is estimated that the three major Icelandic banks (Kaupthing, Landsbanki, and Glitnir) held foreign debt of over €50 billion.¹⁶ That magnitude of debt was roughly estimated to be around €160,000 per Icelandic resident. By 2008, the Icelandic currency, the króna, was ranked by The Economist in early 2007 as the most overvalued currency in the world.¹⁷

Due to the nature of Iceland's small domestic market, the banks largely financed their expansion with interbank lending loans as well as external debt deposits from outside of Iceland. The popular culture of extreme materialism and consumerism in the country also aided in the substantial accumulation of debt. At this time, households took on debts of an average of 213% of their disposable incomes, further exacerbating inflation.¹⁸ To make matters even worse, inflation was intensified by irresponsible actions taken by the Central Bank of Iceland in issuing new, uncovered bonds.

In response to these rocketing prices (estimated at roughly 14% by September of 2008), the Central Bank of Iceland established astronomically high interest rates at 15.5%. These stark disparities in interest rates incentivized overseas investors to hold their deposits in Iceland since they would earn more money in interest by keeping their money in a country with high rates.¹⁹ This caused the Icelandic money supply to grow rapidly by September 2008, creating an extreme economic bubble.

With creditors insisting on payment and no other banks willing to make new loans, Icelandic banks found it increasingly impossible to stay afloat. This circumstance would usually trigger last resort policies, wherein a bank would request a loan from its central bank. However, the Icelandic economic

¹⁵ Danielsson, Jon, and Gylfi Zoega. "Entranced by Banking." CEPR, February 9, 2009. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/entranced-banking>.

¹⁶ "External Debt." Central Bank of Iceland "Statistics" Statistic. Accessed July 27, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20081021220411/http://www.sedlabanki.is/?pageid=552&itemid=a55be3ao-9943-484e-a8de-46d23f17ba25&nextday=4&nextmonth=12>

¹⁷ "The Big Mac Index." The Economist. The Economist Newspaper. Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/economic-and-financial-indicators/2007/02/01/the-big-mac-index>.

¹⁸ "Kreppanomics." The Economist. The Economist Newspaper. Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2008/10/09/kreppanomics>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

structure prevented this from occurring. Icelandic banks had grown so much larger than the size of the national economy that the Central Bank of Iceland and the Icelandic government could not guarantee any payments because there was not nearly enough money in reserves.²⁰ Because the banks were allowed to grow so much larger than the Central Bank, there was not enough money to bail them out. As a result, the banks threatened to go bankrupt.

In response to this rapidly evolving crisis, efforts were announced to nationalize the bank of Glitnir.²¹ In October of 2008, Alþingi implemented an emergency law, citing “unusual financial market circumstances” and enabling the Financial Supervisory Authority (FME) to take control of financial systems and institutions at will. Three new banks were established with the new equity financed by the Icelandic government.²² Overall, these rescue operations had a costly impact on the overall Icelandic debt: the restructuring process led to a 20% increase in the public debt ratio.²³

The repercussions of the financial crisis echoed outside of Iceland. More than a half million depositors lost access to their accounts within Icelandic banks. This resulted in a diplomatic dispute between Iceland, the Netherlands, and the UK due to the retail depositors’ loss of savings.²⁴ Because the Icelandic institutions were unable to make immediate repayment to these depositors, the Dutch and British deposit guarantee schemes covered a portion of the repayment. While the UK and Netherlands pushed for Iceland to take responsibility for their portion of the minimum deposit guarantees, the Icelandic people voted in referendums to reject three separate bills negotiated to define repayment terms.²⁵ The people seemed in part to adhere to increasing sentiments of nationalism that echoed through the higher echelons of the government.²⁶

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “The Government of Iceland Acquires 75 Percent Share in Glitnir Bank.” Glitnir, September 29, 2008. https://web.archive.org/web/20081002023742/http://www.glitnir.is/english/about-glitnir/news/detail/item14983/The_government_of_Iceland_acquires_75_percent_share_in_Glitnir_Bank/.

²² “The Provisional Opening Balance Sheets of the Three New Banks.” The Financial Supervisory Authority - Iceland, November 14, 2008. <https://web.archive.org/web/20081227121521/http://www.fme.is/?PageID=581&NewsID=362>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Thorhallsson, Baldur. “Iceland and European Integration.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1035>.

²⁵ Helgadóttir, Oddný, and Jón Gunnar Ólafsson. “Referendums as Resistance: International Pressures and Nationalist Recoil in Iceland.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 29, no. 8 (2021): 1330–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1931411>.

²⁶ Ibid.

When the third bill, called Icesave 3, was set to a vote via referendum in April 2011 and was once again rejected by the Icelandic people, the stakeholders turned to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Court for legal review. Ultimately, the EFTA Court ruled that Iceland had not neglected its duty to repay deposit guarantees and was thus freed from its obligation to make any financial contribution in this case.²⁷ This court decision resolved what is known as the “Icesave Dispute,” and lingering sentiments of nationalism due to the incident have contributed in part to later Icelandic discourses about continued separation from the EU.²⁸

Despite its resolution, the financial crisis had substantial consequences on the Icelandic economy. Job losses, for instance, were plentiful, both due to the direct impact of the bank restructuring (which was estimated to cause over 2000 vacancies for bank employees) as well as a significant impact on other industries. The national airline, newspaper, importers of restricted nonessential goods, and other industries all saw significant slumps.²⁹ Unemployment tripled by the end of 2008. Even for those Icelanders who retained their jobs, the consequences of the financial crisis were pervasive, affecting pension funds, debt payments, reductions in pay across the workforce, and reductions in working hours.³⁰

Beyond the economic impacts of the crisis, this event also served as a substantial watershed moment for political and social culture in Iceland - the next section will cover the Kitchenware Revolution, where popular emotions boiled to the surface as a result of the crisis and were expressed politically in the form of protest.

Kitchenware Revolution

In October of 2008, famed Icelandic songwriter and activist as well as the first openly gay public figure in Icelandic society, Hörður Torfason (pictured in Figure 2), initiated a one-person protest in Austurvöllur. He stood in the middle of the street with an open microphone and invited people to

²⁷ Case E-16/11 - EFTA Surveillance Authority v Iceland (EFTA Court December 15, 2011).

²⁸ Bergmann, Eiríkur. “Iceland: A Postimperial Sovereignty Project.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 1 (2014): 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713514152>.

²⁹ “Iceland Businesses Feel Sting of Financial Crisis.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, October 10, 2008. <https://www.reuters.com/article/rbssIndustryMaterialsUtilitiesNews/idUSLA15877520081010>.

³⁰ “Interest in Jobs Abroad: IceNews - Daily News.” IceNews, November 22, 2008. <https://www.icenews.is/2008/11/22/interest-in-jobs-abroad/#comment-53133>.

speaking about their concerns with the recent financial crisis. Torfason strongly believed that his human rights were being violated by the bankruptcy and debt crisis.³¹ He saw the actions taken by the banks and the government as evidence of widespread corruption in the government and felt that the Icelandic economic policy response demonstrated a need for significant political reform. Torfason's one-man protest soon escalated into weekly Saturday demonstrations.³² The growing group of protesters voiced their intent to stage a rally every Saturday until the current administration resigned.

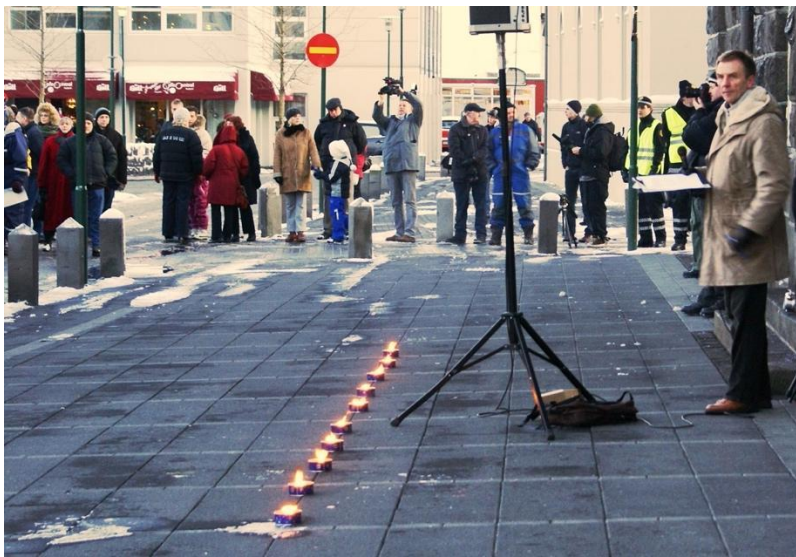


Figure 2: Torfason's one man protest³³

By November of 2008, thousands of Icelanders were gathering weekly in Reykjavik to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Geir Haarde and Central Bank Governor David Oddsson for failing to curtail the financial meltdown.³⁴ In an interview, Torfason argued that the current administration had

³¹ "We Need Far More Radical Changes." The Iceland Weather Report RSS. Accessed August 17, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090328004139/http://icelandweatherreport.com/2009/02/we-need-far-more-radical-changes.html>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Google image result for https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e3/w10_h%c3%b6rdur_torfason_organizer_g761.jpg. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://images.app.goo.gl/RbmjGVLnZmWThWMc8>.

³⁴ "Icelanders Demand PM Resignation, Clash with Police." Forbes, November 22, 2008. <https://archive.ph/20090331214013/http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2008/11/22/afx5730408.html>.

lost its legitimacy and public trust due to its actions and that the entire Icelandic system was “corrupt and worn-out.”³⁵

The protests attracted a diverse group of activists, including teachers, writers, artists, journalists, doctors, and more. By New Year’s Eve, the protests were featured in a comedy sketch in the annual comedy review, *Áramótaskaupið*. In the sketch, Jón Gnarr played a middle-aged protestor workshopping signs that would adequately express his indignation with the blatant mishandling of the crisis and the catastrophic consequences for the Icelandic people. In the sketch, the character finally landed on a humorous yet vulgar phrase that would quickly gain traction as the unofficial motto and rallying cry of the revolution, spreading the word of the protest even further.

By January of 2009, the protests had intensified in size and emotion. On January 20, 2009 people met riot police at the building of the parliament.³⁶ The police used pepper spray and batons to break up the crowd; 20 protesters were ultimately arrested and over 20 more needed medical attention. Seeking to interrupt the year’s first meeting of the Prime Minister and the Alþingi, the demonstrators banged pots and pans (causing the press to coin the event as the “Kitchenware Revolution”), broke windows, threw snowballs, and deployed smoke bombs.³⁷

The following three days saw further escalations of the protests in Reykjavík - demonstrators climbed the walls of the Alþingi and hung a sign that read “Treason due to recklessness is still treason.”³⁸ Others hurled household objects (such as fireworks, shoes, toilet paper, rocks, and stones) at the Parliamentary building and the riot police. The police used tear gas (for the first time in Icelandic history since the 1940s) to try to dispel the protestors, but the demonstrations continued.³⁹

³⁵ Henley, Jon. “Iceland Has an Unlikely New Hero.” Jon Henley: Iceland has an unlikely new hero - a folk guitarist | World news | The Guardian. Accessed August 17, 2022.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090203160545/http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/01/iceland>.

³⁶ “Iceland’s Capital Rocked by Protests.” Radio Netherlands Worldwide, January 20, 2009.

<https://archive.ph/20090123202903/http://www.radionetherlands.nl/news/international/6142952/Icelands-capital-rocked-by-protests>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Icelanders Held over Angry Demo.” BBC News. BBC, January 21, 2009.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7842172.stm>.

³⁹ Ibid.



Figure 3: Protestor gather in opposition to the current government⁴⁰

By the morning of January 23, 2009, the administration gave in to the demands of the demonstrators and announced that new Parliamentary elections would be moved forward on the calendar and the current Prime Minister Geir Haarde would withdraw his name as a candidate.⁴¹ Haarde later announced his immediate resignation in response to further pressure from the protestors.⁴²

In conjunction with the Left-Green Movement, the Social Democratic Alliance joined the Progressive Party and the Liberal Party, to form a new government, with progressive Social Affairs Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir assuming the role of Prime Minister, and the three parties agreeing to convene a constitutional assembly to discuss structural changes to systemic issues.⁴³

⁴⁰ Google image result for https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/w16_protesters_2826.jpg. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://images.app.goo.gl/tYwQNBcJhUrRkiUt8>.

⁴¹ Einarsdóttir, Helga Kristin. "Iceland's Ruling Coalition Splits Following Protests." Bloomberg. January 26, 2009. https://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601085&sid=avntV39aM_7l&refer=europe

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "New Icelandic Government under Negotiation." IceNews - Daily News -. Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20121027135210/http://www.icenews.is/index.php/2009/01/27/new-icelandic-government-being-negotiated/>.

2009 Election

Following strong political pressure from the public during the Kitchenware Revolution, Prime Minister Geir Haarde of the Independent Party announced that he would be withdrawing from politics to receive treatment for his esophageal cancer. As a result, the date of a new election was agreed upon between the coalition partners. The following summarizes changes in leadership and policy priorities for the major political parties in the weeks leading up to the 2009 elections.

The Progressive Party, which was the first of the historic Icelandic political parties to see a change of leadership following the financial crisis, was led by party chairman Sigmundur Davio Gunnlaugsson. He immediately called for early elections in response to public pressure to form a new government.⁴⁴

The Independence Party, which had been in power for eighteen years, foresaw major losses in the upcoming election. It had been chaired by Prime Minister Geir Haarde until he announced his resignation in response to the protests as well as personal health concerns.⁴⁵ He was replaced as party chairman by Bjarni Benediktsson who threw his support behind immediate negotiations for Iceland to join the European Union (EU).⁴⁶

While the newly elected Prime Minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, had initially voiced her resistance to leading the Social Democratic party, she changed her mind in March and easily obtained the votes necessary to accept the role.⁴⁷ She announced just before the election that her priority in the upcoming years would be to obtain EU membership and adopt the euro within four years. Similar goals were shared by the Independence Party.⁴⁸

In addition to the historic parties—the Progressive Party, Independence Party, and Social Democratic Party—two new parties were also formed in the aftermath of the January protests: the Citizens’

⁴⁴ “Opposition Attempts to Call Iceland Elections, Bypassing PM.” IceNews Daily News RSS, January 22, 2009. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090124012239/http://www.icenews.is/index.php/2009/01/22/opposition-attempt-to-call-iceland-elections-bypassing-pm/>.

⁴⁵ Hauksson, K. Mar. “New Leader of the Independence Party in Iceland Selected: IceNews - Daily News.” IceNews, March 29, 2009. <https://www.icenews.is/2009/03/29/new-party-leader-of-the-independence-party-in-iceland/>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir changes mind, becomes likely party leader”, IceNews, March, 20 2009. <http://www.icenews.is/index.php/2009/03/20/johanna-sigurdardottir-changes-mind-becomes-likely-party-leader/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Movement and the Democratic Movement. Additionally, the Icelandic Movement – Living Country (Green Movement) successfully merged with the Social Democratic Party in response to the protests.⁴⁹

Ultimately, the majority of public support was thrown behind the coalition formed between the merged Social Democratic Alliance and the Left-Green Movement, resulting in both parties making significant gains and forming an overall majority of the seats in the Alþingi. The Progressive Party also won seats, as did the new Citizens' Movement, gaining four seats overall in Alþingi.⁵⁰ The biggest losses came from the Independence Party, which had been in power at the time of the crisis and was blamed for much of the disaster. The party lost nine seats, its eighteen-year reign over the government, and a third of its popular support.⁵¹

In addition to the results of the elections, the major powers also agreed to rethink the Icelandic constitution. One of the major topics to consider in this meeting would be the electoral allocation system, which operated on a complicated combination of proportional voting and special leveling seats.

National Assemblies

In 2009 and 2010, private entities and governmental institutions organized a random selection of 950 citizens to gather and discuss the core values that Icelandic governance should follow in the event of constitutional reform. These public groups gathered citizens representing a true cross-section of Icelandic society, ranging in age from 18 to 83 and spanning all six electoral districts.⁵² In the end, the Assembly prioritized integrity and honesty, with consideration given to equal rights, respect, justice, love, responsibility, freedom, sustainability, and democracy.⁵³ The 2010 Assembly in particular

⁴⁹ Hauksson, K. Mar. "Elections in Iceland This Weekend: IceNews - Daily News." IceNews, April 25, 2009. <http://www.icenews.is/index.php/2009/04/22/elections-in-iceland-next-weekend/>.

⁵⁰ "Apportionment of Seats to Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament." The National Electoral Commission of Iceland, April 2010. <https://www.landskjor.is/media/frettir/AnalysisIcelandElection2009.pdf>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Gylfason, Thorvaldur. "Democracy on Ice: A Post-Mortem of the Icelandic Constitution." openDemocracy, June 19, 2013. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/democracy-on-ice-post-mortem-of-icelandic-constitution/>.

⁵³ "Integrity Named Iceland's Most Important Value". *Iceland Review*. November 16, 2009. http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=16539&ew_o_a_id=352029.

concluded that a new constitution “ought to contain certain key provisions concerning electoral reform and the ownership of natural resources.”⁵⁴

The National Assemblies are considered a fundamental aspect of the democratic legitimacy of the 2011 Constitutional Committee. In other words, it would be wise for delegates in the Constitutional Committee to carefully consider and respect the values and policy priorities gathered from the public at these assemblies while drafting the Constitution.

Electing the Constitutional Assembly

By 2010, Alþingi was convinced that a constitutional convention was necessary to address considerable social, political, and legal issues brewing within the country. The government passed the Act on a Constitutional Assembly, which codified the intent for a special Constitutional Assembly to convene in 2011 to revise the Icelandic Constitution of the Republic.⁵⁵ According to the Act, the Assembly would be composed of 25 popularly elected delegates and would have 3 months to draft a revised constitution.⁵⁶ According to the legislation, this revised constitution would then be voted on by Alþingi and put to a vote in a referendum.

The delegates for the Constitutional Convention would need to be elected by popular vote. The election for the assembly was held on November 27, 2010, with over 522 people running for seats at the convention.⁵⁷ These candidates represented an extraordinarily diverse cross-section of the population and consisted of Icelanders from all walks of life. At the end of the elections, 25 candidates were elected to the constitutional assembly. In January of 2011, opposition to the convention appealed to the Supreme Court of Iceland. They argued on a technicality that the elections were improperly conducted. Citing several issues with the ballots (including whether they had been folded when cast), the Supreme Court sided with the opposition and invalidated the election certificates of the delegates.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “CONFERENCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL JUSTICE AS A GUARANTEE OF THE SUPREMACY OF THE CONSTITUTION.” Venice Commission, September 28, 2015. [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI\(2015\)020-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI(2015)020-e).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Hundreds to Run for Constitutional Parliament.” Iceland Review Online, October 19, 2010. https://web.archive.org/web/20120329133218/http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=16568&ew_o_a_id=369131.

Alþingi ultimately voted to appoint the winners of the election to their respective seats on the Committee. However, the political opposition was still gaining traction.⁵⁸ For instance, the Progressive Party, which had previously sided with reformers, joined opposing parties and began to speak out against the actions of the committee. This opposition was maintained by the Independence Party, which had thoroughly opposed any reform to the status quo that had existed during their eighteen years of legislative dominance. There was also quiet resistance among the academic community who resented the public crowd-sourcing structure of the constitution. Much of this resentment was fueled by the deep pockets of the fishing industry which felt threatened by proposals to enshrine national ownership of natural resources. Additionally, members of parliament who saw electoral reform towards a “one person, one vote” system as a threat to their seats in government also backed the resistance.

This power struggle between the reformers and the opposition should be considered and factored into policy debates throughout the drafting process. After all, a constitution that pleases neither Alþingi nor the public in the general referendum vote is ultimately just a piece of paper. Navigating the varied interests raised during the elections will be a crucial component of drafting a successful constitution.

⁵⁸ “Constitutional Assembly Elects Appointed to Council.” Iceland Review Online, February 25, 2022. https://web.archive.org/web/20110228165632/http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/Constitutional_Assembly_Elects_Appointed_to_Council_o_374415.news.aspx.

TOPIC: ICELANDIC CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, 2011

Statement of the Problem

"One Person, One Vote"

Much criticism of the current allocation system for voting is based on the fact that the current system requires more votes for a Member of Parliament (MP) to be elected within an urban district than for rural districts. Many opponents of this system advocate instead for a "one person, one vote" principle for allocating MPs in Alþingi. The delicate balance between urban and rural seats has been constantly adjusted since 1959 to regain control over the disproportionate representation of either rural or urban parliamentarians.⁵⁹ However, seeing that the reform to the system always seems to lag significantly behind migration and continues to cause disproportionate representation (critics cynically argue that farmers in charge of the electoral system want to keep votes concentrated in the countryside even as increasing numbers of people move away), some citizens are looking instead for an entirely new system of allocation and voting.

For reference, below is a summary of the current apportionment system:

Seats in Alþingi are allocated according to two different types of seats – proportional voting and leveling seats. Proportional voting determines nine seats for each of the six constituencies in Iceland (Figure 4).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Renwick, Alan. "Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945: Iceland ." ESCE. https://www.electoralsystemchanges.eu/Files/media/MEDIA_215/FILE/Iceland_summary.pdf.

⁶⁰ "Icelandic Parliamentary Election - 2016." mbl.is, November 6, 2017. <https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/elections2016/>.

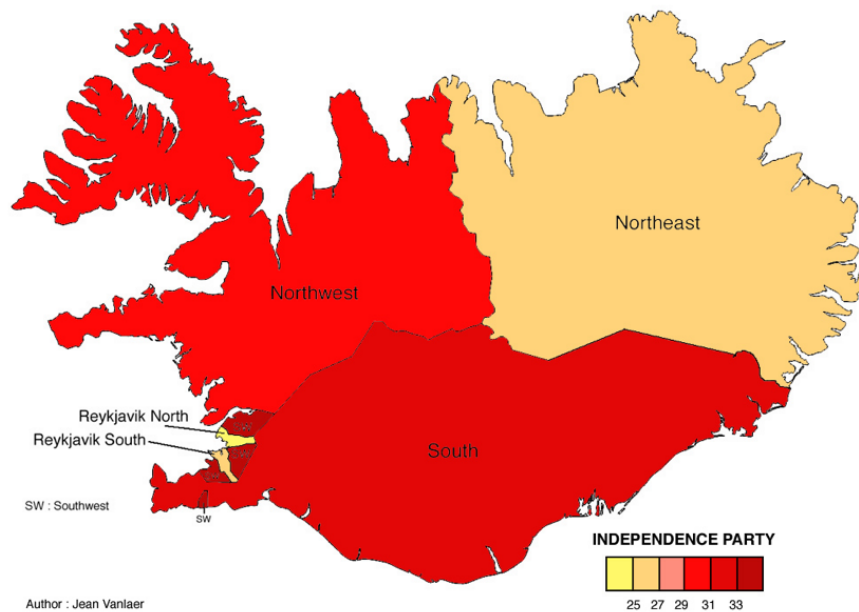


Figure 4: Proportional voting in each of the six constituencies⁶¹

Apportioning Constituency Seats:

As such, the Reykjavik North, Reykjavik South, Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and South Constituencies all receive nine constituency seats. These seats are first split among the political parties according to the proportion of votes received by each party per constituency.⁶² Thus, according to the popular vote, the Independent Party may win 3 of the 9 seats in the Reykjavik North Constituency, with the Progressive Party winning 4 and the Social Democratic Alliance winning the other 2.

Next, the candidates representing their party's newly allocated constituency seats (say the 3 Independent Party seats for the Reykjavik North Constituency) are determined according to the highest "vote score" determined via the Icelandic "candidate vote system."⁶³ The vote score is determined after counting both the direct candidate votes as well as the party votes (the Icelandic "candidate vote system" allows for parties to "pre-rank" candidates on the ballot but also allows

⁶¹ "Iceland. Legislative Election 2016 - Electoral Geography 2.0." Electoral Geography 2.0 - Mapped politics, October 31, 2016. <https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/i/iceland/iceland-legislative-election-2016.html>.

⁶² "24/2000: Lög Um Kosningar Til Alþingis." Alþingi. Accessed August 18, 2022. <https://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2000024.html>.

⁶³ Ibid.

voters to re-rank and cross out candidates as they wish). Thus, the final calculations of the candidate vote shares are based on the proportional fractions of relative ranks assigned to them by the voters. These vote scores are then used to determine which candidates will win one of the total seats distributed to their party.⁶⁴

Apportioning Levelling Seats:

In addition to the constituency seats, leveling seats are utilized as a method of seeking artificial proportionality at the national level. These seats are eligible to be won by any political party that has exceeded 5% of all national votes. These parties then calculate the ratio of their total number of votes at the national level divided by how many seats they would hold in Alþingi, should they be allocated the extra seat.⁶⁵ The first leveling seat is therefore allocated to the party with the highest ratio, thereby granting the extra seat to the party with the highest ratio of votes per seat (thus attempting to level the playing field for any parties that appeal to districts with more people who thus need to win more votes in order to win a constituency seat). This calculation is done for each party nine times until each of the nine leveling seats is allocated.⁶⁶

The parties then grant their allocated leveling seats to the runner-up candidates who have the highest relative vote share but did not win a constituency vote.

Critiques of the Icelandic Election System

The UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) received a complaint filed by an Icelandic Supreme Court Advocate claiming that the current electoral system favors certain political parties (i.e. the Independence Party and Progressive Parties had a large proportion of the coalition seats despite not receiving the majority of the popular votes). Although the UNHRC ultimately dismissed these claims, critics still point to the unequal suffrage between rural and urban voters as an example of unequal

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Helgason, Thorkell. "Apportionment of Seats to Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament." The National Electoral Commission of Iceland. Accessed August 18, 2022.
<https://www.landskjor.is/media/frettir/AnalysisIcelandElection2009.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

vote weighting.⁶⁷ The current system is artificially construed to create an equal division between rural and urban seats in Parliament based on a significantly unequal number of votes.

An interesting caveat to this debate is that any new constitution passed by the convention requires Alþingi support to be ratified as law, creating a bit of a chicken and egg situation. In other words, the MP votes needed for this new constitution belong to politicians elected based on a status quo established by this very system. Therefore, the political calculus in drafting new constitutional language must also take into account how electoral reform in the constitution will affect its likelihood to pass through Alþingi.

Natural Resource Management

Another major issue within this debate regards the allocation of natural resource rights. In the mid-1980s, Parliament granted a closed group of people free access to Iceland's fishing grounds, effectively fostering a closed guild of individuals who held exclusive fishing licenses.

The concentration of power in the hands of these select individuals (coined in Icelandic culture as "sea barons" or "quota kings") has thus led to the concentration of political and social power in the hands of a wealthy and privileged oligarchic class.⁶⁸

While legislation was passed in 1990 defining the fish stocks as the "common property of the Icelandic nation," nothing was done to implement any change until 2002, when a small fishing fee was levied against the license holders. However, this fee did virtually nothing to redistribute wealth or change the political or economic concentration of power. In fact, the UNHRC expressed in 2007 that the Icelandic fisheries management system was discriminatory and constituted a violation of human rights.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Gylfason, Thorvaldur. "Iceland's Ongoing Constitutional Fight." *Verfassungsblog*, November 29, 2018. <https://verfassungsblog.de/icelands-ongoing-constitutional-fight/>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Einarsson, Niels. "When Fishing Rights Go Up against Human Rights." In *Gambling Debt: Iceland's Rise and Fall in the Global Economy*, edited by E. PAUL DURRENBERGER and GISLI PALSSON, 151–60. University Press of Colorado, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt169wdcd.17>.



Figure 5: An Icelandic Fishing Vessel⁷⁰

Natural Resource Management

Recent trends in environmental accountability have led to increased attention towards natural resource transactions and protections.⁷¹ Thus, there is significant pressure for countries to prioritize the environment and codify the right of their citizens to inhabit a healthy environment. Enshrining these rights within environmental constitutionalism is a relatively recent phenomenon that sits at the intersection of constitutional law, international law, and human rights, and some perceive it as a vital component of a modern constitution.⁷² Though the scope and extent of these provisions have largely varied across different constitutional regimes, many constitutions now incorporate provisions regarding national and international obligations to protect the environment and institutionalize the

⁷⁰ Google image result for https://live.staticflickr.com/3035/3017182810_ce1f696f45_b.jpg. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://images.app.goo.gl/ywn8KcNcPNascg6U9>.

⁷¹ O’Gorman, Roderic. “Environmental Constitutionalism: A Comparative Study.” *Transnational Environmental Law* 6, no. 3 (2017): 435–62. doi:10.1017/S2047102517000231.

⁷² Weis, Lael K. “Environmental Constitutionalism: Aspiration or Transformation?” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 16, no. 3 (2018): 836–70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moyo63>.

responsibility for future generations. Some constitutional provisions that have been suggested for inclusion are:

1. Affirming the right of nature itself, and placing obligations on the State to protect these rights
2. Affirming the human right to a clean and healthy environment
3. Providing for the right to property under the human rights section of the constitution
4. Directing institutional control and transparency in the allocation of resources
5. Constitutional structures encouraging environmental legislation or regulation

Transparency

One of the most contested issues after the financial crisis was the lack of transparency within Icelandic media and government.⁷³ Seeking more transparency and accountability within a new government, there are several key targets to consider. Bear in mind that this document requires public and administrative support in order to ensure its success. Therefore, the constitutional drafters should look to combine policy solutions for some of the following issues regarding transparency while striking compromises or pursuing moderate reform on others.

The Role of the Prime Minister

Under the current constitution, the Prime Minister (PM) is situated at the head of a “parliamentary system with president,” i.e. as a head of state chosen based on the party that is currently in power.⁷⁴ The current PM enjoys no term limits whatsoever, has a rather ambiguous role within the government, and enjoys presidential immunity against efforts to hold them accountable for actions taken while in office. This elicits several considerations for drafters to keep in mind.

⁷³ Jónasson, Árni Múli. “A Wake-up Call in Reykjavík - Blog.” Transparency.org, February 4, 2021. <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/a-wake-up-call-in-reykjav%C3%ADk>.

⁷⁴ Einarsdóttir, Gréta Sigríður. “What Is the Difference between the Prime Minister and the President of Iceland?” Iceland Review, April 29, 2021. <https://www.icelandreview.com/ask-ir/what-is-the-difference-between-the-prime-minister-and-the-president-of-iceland/>.

Delegates of the constitutional committee may want to consider how much power the PM should hold. This power may be further limited by examining whether a PM should have a guarantee of absolute or partial immunity. Additionally, another check on the power of the PM could be found by exploring the mechanisms by which the PM is chosen. Delegates should carefully consider whether the current status quo of de-facto electing the leader of the majority party into the role of PM is an appropriate allocation of power. Further, the constitutional function of the PM determines a great deal of their power; to clarify the role of the PM, delegates should consider whether the PM should have veto power over legislation and if so, how much power this should confer. Delegates could also consider the other roles that the PM should play in legislation (i.e. is it better for the Prime Minister to be completely divorced from the legislating process or should they play a significant role?), whether the public should have the power to levy a vote of no confidence against a sitting Prime Minister (and if so, how?), what the comparative competence should be between the PM and the Cabinet of Ministers, and whether there should be a year and term limit for the PM (and if so, how long?). All of these provisions are important levers of power that influence the political influence of the PM as an important figure within Icelandic public policy.

The Cabinet of Ministers

The Cabinet of Ministers is formed under the party of the Prime Minister and consists of nine individual ministries: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Local Government, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Industries and Innovation, Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the Ministry of Welfare.⁷⁵ Under current procedures, Ministers in the Cabinet can also serve in Alþingi, creating no separation of powers between the legislature and cabinet.

Further, under the current 1944 Constitution, there is little written as to the political and individual liability of ministers. There are no provisions that stipulate what consequences, if any, exist should a cabinet minister lose the confidence of the public or Alþingi. Several questions should be clarified about the role and responsibilities of the Cabinet. For example, drafters should consider how ministers should be appointed to consider the relative power and responsibilities of the role. Under

⁷⁵ "Cabinet of Iceland." placeandsee.com. Accessed August 18, 2022. <https://placeandsee.com/wiki/cabinet-of-iceland>.

the current status quo, cabinets are assembled based on the party of the Prime Minister and the majority party in Alþingi. Furthermore, delegates should consider provisions of accountability for Minister behavior. For example, delegates should discuss whether there should exist constitutional contingencies for the removal of Cabinet members and whether mechanisms for impeachment should be established to hold ministers responsible for their actions. Under the current constitution, no such measures are in place.

Beyond measures of accountability, delegates should consider clarifying the function and form of the Ministries to clarify the vague mandate within the 1944 Constitution. For example, delegates may want to consider who should preside over the Cabinet and what power this position should confer, how big the cabinet should be, and whether cabinet members should continue to be allowed to serve concurrently as MPs. This brings into question the principle of separation of powers. Delegates should consider whether the separation of powers should exist within the Icelandic government, and, if so, how it should be defined. Finally, delegates should examine the current ministries and consider whether new positions should be created to better care for the needs of the country.

Referendums and Public Participation

The financial crisis has led to some calls for increased public participation in the legislation and administration processes in the government.⁷⁶ These policy arguments specifically highlight the need for a **referendum** system by which the public can call for specific legislation to be implemented. Referendums in Iceland are currently used to remove the President of the Republic or are implemented in the case that the president refuses to confirm a bill. Additionally, if the Parliament passes an amendment on the status of the Church or if Alþingi wants non-binding polls of the public opinion, referendums may also be used.⁷⁷ However, there could be justification for strengthening the system or better integrating their results into the legislating process by granting successful referendums legal legitimacy.

⁷⁶ Helgadóttir, Oddný, and Jón Gunnar Ólafsson. "Referendums as Resistance: International Pressures and Nationalist Recoil in Iceland." *Journal of European Public Policy* 29, no. 8 (2021): 1330–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1931411>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

If referendum reform is a policy solution within the constitution, this presents many considerations that drafters should keep in mind. For example, delegates might seek to set a specific percentage of votes that would be able to trigger a referendum to integrate more clarity into the system. Further, delegates should consider whether the function of referendums should be expanded from the current status quo to allow for votes on international treaties or internal law. Similarly, it may be considered whether referendums can be called on **fiduciary acts** such as the budget.

Further, questions may arise regarding the procedure and logistics of referendum votes. For example, who should be delegated from the government to oversee referendum votes and how should these results be shared with the general public?

Finally, there are many legal questions regarding referendum reform. Referendums currently only function as an informal poll of citizen opinion and can be disregarded by Alþingi if they so choose. Delegates could strengthen this mandate by considering whether MPs have a democratic duty to respect the results of referendums (and if so, how?), whether referendum votes should be in some way legally binding (and if so, how?), and if referendums should carry positive legal legitimacy or if they should only have negative force (i.e. vetoing a law).

Economic Concerns

The economy is a fundamental component of the constitutional reform process and a key consideration for delegates to avoid another financial crisis. Delegates in the convention should consider and carefully debate the role of banks, financial regulations, and safety measures while considering the financial future of the country. In addition, significant consideration should be given to the debate of joining or abstaining from the EU since the financial crisis illuminated the weaknesses of the Icelandic central bank in bailing out Icelandic financial institutions.⁷⁸ Delegates should consider the merits of joining the EU or pursuing other international agreements to support the financial stability of the recovering nation. In addition, delegates should carefully consider both short and long-term policies that could help the Icelandic people recover financially - both preventative measures that ensure that banks are not allowed to grow at such an astonishing rate

⁷⁸ Hilmarsson, Hilmar Þór. "Iceland and Economic Integration: In or Outside the European Union?" *Applied Economics: Systematic Research* 11, no. 1 (2017): 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.7220/aesr.2335.8742.2017.11.1.3>.

and exceed the size of the central bank or take on irresponsible debt, as well as policies that address the unemployment, job instability, floundering pension funds, debt payments, reductions in pay across the workforce, and reductions in working hours should all be carefully considered.

Questions to Consider

Designing a whole new constitution is not an easy feat and it can be helpful to consider the issues that are most pressing in the minds of the Icelandic citizenry calling for reform. The following section enumerates a list of potential questions. In addition to this foundation, delegates should also consider committee priorities; in other words, what issues should be prioritized within the new constitution? What policy areas deserve the most attention? Where can compromises be made?

Another caveat to consider is the unique challenge of ratification—after all, writing the document will be only half of the battle. Delicate policy balances and complex political calculus will be necessary to secure enough votes in Parliament, many of whom secure funding or other forms of support from stakeholders affected by policies in the constitution. Keep these delicate power relations and political dynamics in mind when considering the following questions.

"One Person, One Vote"

1. How can constituency and leveling seats be apportioned so that rural and urban voters have equal representation?
2. Would a system of direct electoral representation without the distinction between constituency and leveling seats increase or decrease disproportionate representation?
3. How can the voices of underrepresented urban voters be amplified by policy solutions?
4. What different initiatives and policy directives can the government encourage to narrow the representation gap?

5. To what degree is disproportionate representation systemic rather than a policy issue? How does this change the constitutional strategy?

Natural Resource Management

1. Should the quota system be abolished?
2. What system for fishery ownership should replace the quota system?
3. How should the constitution protect against the formation of industrial oligarchies?
4. What would the implementation of public ownership for all natural resources look like?
5. Are there compromises or solutions that return some of the income from fishing and other natural resources to the people? What would the implementation of these policies look like?
6. Should licenses be abolished within the finishing industry? If not, what regulations should be associated with the allocation of these licenses?

Environmental Constitutionalism

1. Should the Icelandic constitution include provisions regarding national and international obligations to protect the environment?
2. What form should these provisions assume? Should they appear as institutional controls or be filtered through human rights frameworks?
3. Should these mandates be legally enforceable?
4. What does the implementation of environmental constitutionalism look like?
5. How strong should the language for this section be? What provisions for enforcement mechanisms should be included?

6. What specific resources and areas should be protected by these provisions?

Transparency

The Power of the Prime Minister

1. How much power should the Prime Minister hold?
2. Should a PM have absolute or partial immunity?
3. How should the PM be chosen? Is the current status quo of de-facto electing the leader of the majority party dangerous?
4. Should the PM have veto power over legislation? If so, how much power should this confer?
5. What other roles should the PM play in legislation? Is it better for the Prime Minister to be completely divorced from the legislating process or should they play a significant role in oversight?
6. Should the public have the power to levy a vote of no confidence against a sitting Prime Minister? If so, how?
7. What should the comparative competence be between the PM and the Cabinet of Ministers?
8. Should there be a year and term limit for the PM? If so, how long?

The Powers of the Cabinet

1. How should ministers be appointed?
2. Should there be constitutional contingencies for the removal of Cabinet members?
3. Who should preside over the Cabinet? What power should this position confer?

4. How big should the cabinet be?
5. Should cabinet members be allowed to serve concurrently as MPs? Does concurrent appointment violate the separation of powers? And for that matter, should separation of powers exist within the Icelandic government, and, if so, how should it be defined?
6. What is the proper role of the Cabinet of Ministers? Should new positions be created to better care for the needs of the country? If so, which ones?
7. What mechanisms for impeachment should be established to hold ministers responsible for their actions?

Referendums and Public Participation

1. What percent of votes should trigger a referendum?
2. Should referendums be allowed for votes of international treaties or only for internal law?
3. Who should be delegated from the government to oversee referendum votes and results?
4. How should referendum results be shared with the general public?
5. Do MPs have a democratic duty to respect the results of referendums? If so, how?
6. If referendums can be called on fiduciary acts such as the budget, should these referendum votes be in some way legally binding? If so, how?
7. Should referendums only have negative force (i.e. vetoing a law) or can they carry positive legal legitimacy as well?

Economic Concerns

1. What is the role of banks in society and government? What regulations should exist to protect citizens from financial institutions and vice versa?
2. What safety measures should exist within financial institutions? How can these safety measures be enshrined in the constitution?
3. Should Iceland join the EU? How would this international event change economic policy?
4. What preventative measures can be codified in the constitution to ensure that banks are not allowed to grow at such an astonishing rate and exceed the size of the central bank or take on irresponsible debt?
5. In the wake of the financial crisis, what economic policies can help Icelanders recover financially? Should the constitution address unemployment, job instability, floundering pension funds, debt payments, reductions in pay across the workforce, or reductions in working hours?

While this list of questions is certainly not exhaustive, we hope it provides you with a starting foundation to build upon when considering the policy agendas that you will bring into the constitutional convention. The drafting process will inevitably bring a number of compromises, changes, and challenges to your policy solutions to the above questions. The best platforms will be flexible and adaptable to the perspectives of other delegates.

Character Biographies

Þorvaldur Gylfason (Thorvaldur Gylfason): University Professor of Economics

Gylfason is a true Icelandic, born and raised until he left the nest to pursue his education in college. He earned his economics degree from the University of Manchester in 1973 and got his Ph.D. from Princeton University in the United States in 1976. His time in the states didn't break his love for football, which he got into during his time as an undergrad. Following his graduation from Princeton, he became an economist at the International Monetary Fund until returning to Princeton for a short while. He eventually moved back to Iceland, where he has been teaching economics ever since. Gylfason has done a lot of work in international politics and economics and is largely concerned with Iceland's role in the international money and commodity markets.

Salvör Nordal: Director of the University of Iceland's Ethics Institute

Growing up in the late 20th century, Nordal became interested in women's rights as well as privacy in a growing informational society. After attending the University of Iceland for her bachelor's and the University of Calgary for her master's and Ph.D., Nordal published a number of papers and began working for her alma mater. Her main papers are written on privacy policy, child welfare and the responsibility of society, and the social and ethical bases of human genomic databases. In the constitutional convention, Nordal is largely concerned with how the law will manage the privacy of the people, and how modern advancements will not abuse the privacy laws previously put in place.

Ómar Þorfinnur Ragnarsson: Media Presenter and Environmental Activist

Omar was a natural performer and started his media career at the age of 12. He became a stand-up comedian by age 18 and was also gifted with the ability to write good song lyrics, which were performed by Icelandic pop stars. However, he was studious and decided to pursue his education in law, but took a 180 and became a pilot. His TV career also continued, and he became well known in Iceland. In 2006, he used his fame for good and led an environmental protest against a power plant, leading to the foundation of Iceland's environmentalist political party, Living Land. In 2006, he was named Man of the Year, and on his 70th birthday in 2010, September 16th was named "Icelandic

Nature Day” in his honor for all of the environmental activism he has done. He is still active in the fight to preserve nature and reduce the use of unsustainable energy, in Iceland and worldwide.

Andrés Magnússon: Physician

From a young age, Andrés was very perceptive of the emotions and habits of others. He hated seeing people in pain or sickness from chronic illnesses, and this inspired him to become a doctor. A majority of his work is on mental health, genetics, and the intersection of the two. He has done studies on Icelandic and Norwegian populations and has been influential in his field. By getting involved in the constitutional convention, Andrés is hoping to promote mental health awareness as well as to advocate for more funding and government attention on medical advancements.

Pétur Gunnlaugsson: Radio Presenter and Lawyer

Pétur was born and raised in Canada where his parents both had to work full time to support him and his siblings. His father had worked his way up the corporate ladder and eventually became a successful CFO, inspiring Pétur to follow his dreams of becoming a lawyer. He attended McGill University in Canada for his undergraduate degree in media communications and ethics, and he pursued his law degree at NYU after being offered an internship there during his years as an undergrad. He moved to Iceland to follow his wife and built a successful law firm, and also got involved in activism in the local radio station. His interest in the constitutional convention largely lies in the legal aspect, but he is also interested in public opinion and keeping the public properly informed during the convention.

Porkell Helgason: Mathematician

Helgason is a simple man with simple desires. He only dreamed to be like the people he admired most: his teachers and professors. He got his undergraduate degree in math, his masters in math, and, believe it or not, his Ph.D. in math. He then proceeded to teach math at his high school. He eventually became a college professor at the University of Iceland. After 15 years, he was asked to serve in the Department of Energy, and he was director from 1996-2007. He became increasingly interested in the voting system and democracy, hence his desire to be involved in the constitutional

convention. His largest concern is the balance of power between the people and the government and hopes to give the people freedom and autonomy while still maintaining a functional and strong government.

Ari Teitsson: Farmer

Ari is from humble beginnings. His family, native Icelanders, owned a potato farm, and Ari grew up working on it. He was homeschooled with his siblings until he was 8 when he started going to traditional school. As he grew up, he gained an increasing interest in the economics of farming and government interference in the farming industry. He had plans to go to college to get his degree in economics, but his father asked him to take over the farm since he was getting old and the farm was still turning a profit. Ari took over and became a successful farmer and farm manager. But his interest in economics still continued, and when the constitutional convention came around, he knew he was the right person to advocate for the farmers. His main concerns lie in price ceilings on crops and maintaining international trade partners to keep the farms profitable.

Illugi Jökulsson: Journalist

Illugi was born in New York City while his parents were wrapping up their time teaching in the United States. Both of his parents are natives of Iceland, so Illugi quickly gained dual citizenship, despite his parents extending their stay in the US. When he was in middle school, his family finally moved back to Iceland, but Illugi had been inspired by the press in New York. He made it his goal to get his education in journalism and media and tell the stories of the underrepresented. Illugi went to Columbia University in New York and got his Bachelor's in journalism and public policy. He landed a job as a reporter in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, and has been working for Fréttablaðið since 2001. He still dreams of being in government, since his time in public policy was inspiring to him, and the constitutional convention is a major opportunity.

Freyja Haraldsdóttir: Activist

Freyja was born in 1986 with a medical condition called osteogenesis imperfecta, a disease that weakens the bones in her body. Luckily her variation is not severe, and it didn't stop her from living a

normal life. Her family moved to New Zealand when she was 13, but she always loved Iceland and returned there to go to college. She got her degree in social pedagogy, essentially a holistic view of interacting with people in educational and caregiving settings. Given her genetic disease, she had spent a lot of time in hospitals and wanted to give other people the same care and attention she was fortunate to receive. She worked as an advocate for additional disability accommodations and aids, leading fundraisers and rallies. She got her Master's degree, and at the age of 23, she has now been elected to the constitutional assembly. Additionally, she also works for the Independent Living Center in Iceland where she helps care for the elderly and disabled, a job which she adores and has decided to continue despite the constitutional convention. Freyja hopes to advocate for the disabled and continue to add accommodations across Iceland and wants to increase government policy in this area.

Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir: Lecturer in International Politics

Silja was born in Iceland, but her family moved to England quickly after she was born. Icelandic nationality was a large part of her upbringing within the home despite living in England. In school, she learned about England's history and international politics surrounding the European Union. She took this information to heart in her own way and aspired to become a politician in Iceland. She went to Lewis and Clark College in the United States and got her Bachelor's in International Affairs, got her Master's in International Relations, and her Ph.D in Government and Politics. At this moment, she is on par to become a politician and is taking her opportunity in the constitutional convention to make her mark. Her students are all behind her and have already led a number of activism rallies. Her greatest asset is her determinism and charisma, and she hopes these come to fruition in improving international relations during the convention.

Örn Bárður Jónsson: Pastor

Örn is a Christian pastor with a wide theological education background, earning degrees from universities in Iceland, the United States, and the UK. He became a Parish priest in 1985 and became the educational director of his church in 1995. He was also the secretary of the Christian Festival Committee from 1993-1999. He is best known, however, for his writings on social issues, cultural

issues, and religion. He started publishing in 1999 and has continued to do so over the years. Örn initially got interested in the constitutional convention because he doesn't want religion to become obsolete in the government slate. While he supports freedom of religion and a just and unbiased legal system, he still feels that religion and its traditions should be advocated for.

Eiríkur Bergmann Einarsson: Reader of Political Science

Eiríkur was born and raised in Iceland's capital, Reykjavik. Born to politicians, he was engrossed in politics from an early age. He obtained his degree in political science from the University of Iceland and from the University of Copenhagen. Currently, he is a professor at Bifröst University in Iceland. When he isn't teaching, he is writing columns for magazines. His main interests lie in Nativist Populism, conspiracy theories, and Iceland's political economy. He has a lot of respect in the journalism community and a wide following, and he hopes to share his experience at the constitutional convention with his loyal readers.

Dögg Harðardóttir: Manager of the Division of Architecture at Reykjavik Art Museum

Dögg is an Icelander through and through. Her family emphasized Icelandic culture and familial relationships throughout her childhood, giving her a sturdy support system and a curious mind as she went into school. Her parents were both doctors, and she always assumed she would end up in the medical field. However, while in university she realized she had a passion for art and, perhaps most notably, the spaces it was portrayed in. She ended up pursuing architecture and art history and was hired as an assistant curator in the department of architecture at the Reykjavik art museum. She worked her way up and stuck with the museum through highs and lows, and eventually became the manager of the Division of Architecture. Going into the convention, she hopes to emphasize the importance of Icelandic culture in this discussion.

Vilhjálmur Þorsteinsson: Chairman of CCP Games

Vilhjálmur is currently the chairman of CCP Games, a video game company founded in Iceland, but his road to success was paved with challenges. Growing up, he was a quiet kid and often kept to himself. He found solace in games where he could finish levels and feel a sense of pride. He learned

to enjoy art in high school and found his passions intersected in college with video game design. He eventually landed a marketing internship with CCP games and fit in immediately. He has been at the company since 2003 and is currently the chairman due to his years of hard work and passion for the brand. In the ever-growing age of digital media, Vilhjálmur thinks that digital design and marketing need to be acknowledged within the convention, and hopes to keep the company growing and successful for years to come.

Pórhildur Þorleifsdóttir: Theater Director

Pórhildur was born in Ísafjörður, a city in northern Iceland. The city possessed normal elementary schools and a music school; Pórhildur always admired its musically-inclined students. She wasn't a musician, but she had a wonderful sense of the theater and was involved in her school's drama department through high school. She did not attend college and instead pursued a career in acting. She eventually found acting stressful and demanding, but still loved the industry, so she became a director. Over time, she has gained directing experience in theater, opera, film, and television. Aside from her artistic career, she represented the Women's List, a feminist political party, in the supreme national parliament of Iceland from 1987-1991. At the convention, she is hoping to represent artists across Iceland as well as maintain a feminist agenda.

Pawel Bartoszek: Mathematician

Pawel was born in 1980 in a fishing town in Iceland. His mother worked as a nurse in a local hospital and his father was a fisherman, as many were. Pawel, unfortunately, was prone to seasickness, so most of his after-school hours were spent in the hospital lounge where his mom worked or out with his friends. He loved riding bikes and any outdoor activity not on a boat. When he got to college and it came time for him to choose a major, he wrote each major on a piece of paper and picked a random one out of the bowl: math. Oddly, he had a real knack for math and ended up loving his studies. He continued to get his Master's and a doctorate in mathematics and now works for the company that makes fishing boats in Iceland as a mathematician. In the convention, he wants to highlight Iceland's primary industries and wants to help reduce poverty in many of the fishing towns.

Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir: University Professor

A native Icelandic, Arnfríður always wanted to be a teacher. She spent all of her spare time learning more about anything until she finally found her interest in religion when she was in middle school. She got her degree in theology from the University of Iceland, and impressively got her doctorate from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago the same year. She was ordained in 1987, and she has taught at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Iceland ever since. She's loyal to her God and country, and wants to see the convention keep the people's freedoms at the forefront.

Erlingur Sigurdarson: Former Museum Director and Teacher

Erlingur grew up reading books about dinosaurs and the history of Iceland and begged his parents to go to the museum whenever possible. When he was older, he got his own yearly pass and would spend all of his free time there, mostly doing homework and asking questions since he already knew everything about all of the exhibits. When he was in high school, he got a job working front desk and over time worked his way up to director. He did get a college degree in management when he was in his 20s to make himself a stronger candidate for a promotion in the future, and his hard work paid off. He recently retired from his position at the museum, but he saw this convention election as an opportunity to really make a difference in Iceland. He is hoping to emphasize the importance of Iceland's history and traditions while creating this new government.

Íris Lind Karlsdóttir: Media presenter and university student

Íris is an adventurer. She loves Iceland for its natural beauty and its bountiful exploration opportunities. Growing up, she spent most of her time outdoors and as she got older, she started to explore more of Iceland. When it came time for her to go to college, environmental studies seemed like the most fitting option. She got involved in several environmentalist groups during her time in school and started engaging in protests to combat climate change and the destruction of natural beauty. Currently, she works for a radio station and talks about the environment, green living, and other sustainable practices, and she is also in school part-time getting her Master's degree. She wants the environment to be a top priority for the Council and future Icelandic government and wants to be the one to bring it to the top of the agenda.

Katrín Oddsdóttir: Lawyer

Katrín grew up in London with Icelandic parents who were practicing attorneys. She went to college for journalism at Dublin City University because she was interested in public opinion and how it can shape politics and public policy. She got her Master's in Human Rights from London University and now resides in Iceland as a lecturer at the university. Aside from her work at the university, she also is an activist focused on civil and democratic rights, hence her interest in being a part of the constitutional council. She is especially an expert in refugee law and wants to make sure the council provides ethical and equal immigration policy.

Guðmundur Gunnarsson: Trade Union Chairman

Guðmundur was an inventive kid, always taking things apart and putting them back together, as well as building new things out of scrap materials. Instead of traditional university education, he chose to go be an electrician, and he went to the Technical College of Iceland. After graduating in 1969, he was an ordinary electrician for years. He loved his work but eventually wanted to make more of an impact. He became the leader of the Icelandic Electricians' Union, where he served from 1993-2011. During this time, he was also a representative of the Independence Party (1994-98) and was Chairman of the Nordic Federation of Electricians' Unions from 1994-1996, and again from 2004-2006. He has a lot of political experience as well as a lot of connections across Iceland, and worker's rights are his primary concern.

Katrín Fjelsted: Physician

Katrín was born on a military base in England in 1946, right after World War II. She was fortunate to grow up with her parents, both of whom were in active service during the war in some capacity. Quickly after she was born, her family moved to Iceland for a calmer lifestyle. They bought a farm, instilling in her and her siblings the value of hard work. In college, she decided to go into medicine. She finished her A levels in 1966, and eventually finished her specific training in family medicine in 1979 in London. In the 80s, she started getting into politics. She was a member of the Reykjavík city council from 1982-1994 and was a city executive council member from 1986-1994. She moved back to the medical world and was the Chairman of the Icelandic Council of Family Physicians from

1994-1999. She then became a member of parliament from 1999-2003. From 2006-07 and from 2008-09, she was elected as CPME vice president. Needless to say, she's had a lot of experience in the political world as well as the medical field and hopes to emphasize this connection at the convention.

Ástrós Gunnlaugsdóttir: Political Scientist and University Student

Ástrós was born and raised in Iceland to Swedish parents. Growing up in Reykjavík, the city is all she's ever known, but she loves it. She did debate in high school and had an interest in politics, so she majored in political science. She graduated in 2003 and started interning in the capital. She progressed from intern to employee, and when the election came around, she decided to run as a voice for the young people in Iceland. Now that she has been elected as the youngest member of the council, her goal is to make sure the voices of her generation are not overshadowed by the older, more experienced politicians.

Gísli Tryggvason: Consumer Spokesperson

Gísli grew up accompanying her dad to his maintenance jobs as a mechanic and electrician. She enjoyed working with her hands and was never a fan of electronic work. She went to a specialized high school where they learned more mechanics, as well as traditional education requirements. After finishing high school, she went to trade school to become an electrician and landed a job in the hydropower and HVAC division. She climbed the ranks quickly due to her experience and leadership skills, and eventually became a manager. She then realized that her employees and colleagues needed a spokesperson, so she hired a new manager and made the role her own. She is currently a spokesperson for the HVAC and hydropower division in Iceland and is excited to emphasize workers' rights and the importance of trade schools in the assembly.

Lýður Árnason: Filmmaker and Physician

Lýður isn't really from any one place since his parents moved him and his sister around every two years for their work as missionaries. His favorite place was Iceland where his grandparents lived and where his parents were from, so he decided to go to the University of Iceland and settle in one place.

He could not, however, settle on a career. While in college, he worked in timber sales, a furniture workshop, a saddlery, and in gardening. He got his undergraduate degree in biology on the premed track and became a doctor. He has worked in hospitals as well as in family medicine in Iceland. He landed a job in management at a film company in 1996, and he also became the chief physician at the Flateyri Health Center from 1997-2002. Currently, he is still in management at the film company, and thought his perspective from his many jobs and life experiences would be beneficial to the council for the convention.

Glossary

Alþingi - The Alþingi is the supreme national parliament of Iceland. It is one of the oldest surviving parliaments in the world.

Bankrupt - a legal designation that is given to entities that are unable to pay their outstanding debts.

Bonds - a legal deed that commits one entity to the payment of another.

Coalition - an alliance for combined action, especially a temporary alliance of political parties forming a government or of states; a coalition government forms in Iceland when multiple political parties combine to form a governing majority in Alþingi.

Constituency Seats - any of the seats in Alþingi that are granted by proportional voting within any given Icelandic constituency (voting district). Each constituency receives 9 Constituency Seats in Alþingi to be divided proportionally among the political parties.

Consumerism - a social and economic order that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts.

Default - the failure to make required interest or principal repayments on a debt, whether that debt is a loan or security. Individuals, businesses, and even countries can default on their debt obligations.

Depositors - a person who has deposited money in a bank or similar institution.

Disposable income - income remaining after deduction of taxes and other mandatory charges, available to be spent or saved as one wishes.

Economic bubble - A market phenomenon characterized by surges in asset prices to levels significantly above the fundamental value of that asset.

Electoral allocation system - the system by which seats in Alþingi are allocated to candidates in an election.

Environmental constitutionalism - a new concept that protects local and global environmental conditions by invoking national and subnational constitutional law. Constitution-drafters in all legal traditions commit to environmental stewardship, protection, and sustainability.

Equity (finance) - ownership of assets that may have debts or other liabilities attached to them. Equity is measured for accounting purposes by subtracting liabilities from the value of the assets.

Fiduciary acts - acts involving trusts, dealing with assets.

Guild - an association of people for mutual aid or the pursuit of a common goal.

Inflation - A general increase in the prices of goods and services in an economy. When the general price level rises, each unit of currency buys fewer goods and services; consequently, inflation corresponds to a reduction in the purchasing power of money.

Interest groups - a group of people that seeks to influence public policy on the basis of particular common interest or concern.

Krona - Icelandic currency.

Last resort policies - the institution in a financial system that acts as the provider of liquidity to a financial institution that finds itself unable to obtain sufficient liquidity in the interbank lending market when other facilities or such sources have been exhausted.

Leveling seats - an election mechanism employed for many years by all Nordic countries (except Finland) in elections for their national legislatures. Leveling seats are seats of additional members elected to supplement the members directly elected by each constituency. The purpose of these additional seats is to ensure that each party's share of the total seats is roughly proportional to the party's overall shares of votes at the national level.

Materialism - a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

Nationalist ideas - loyalty and devotion to a nation especially. a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on the promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.

Oligarchic - a small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution

Proportional voting - an electoral system in which parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them.

Public debt ratio - the metric comparing a country's public debt to its gross domestic product (GDP).

Referendum - direct vote by the electorate on a proposal, law, or political issue.

Refinance - to trade an old mortgage, loan, or financing agreement in for another one.

Reserves (banking) - stores of cash banks are legally forced to keep on hand in case of extra demand.

Restructuring - changes in the constituent parts of an economy in a very general sense.

Sambandslögin - "Union law" signed between Denmark and Iceland, establishing the official Kingdom of Iceland.

Sovereignty - the authority of a state to govern itself.

Suffrage - the right to vote.

Unicameral system - type of legislature, which consists of one house or assembly, that legislates and votes as one.

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