

House of Lords renews support for legislation to outlaw caste discrimination

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The National Secular Society has praised the House of Lords for its renewed support of victims of caste discrimination in the UK after peers voted to retain their original amendment making caste a protected characteristic (as an aspect of race) under equality law.

MPs last week rejected a Lords amendment to make discrimination on grounds of caste unlawful via a new clause in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill. But late last night peers defeated the Government by 181 votes to 168, insisting that their amendment to outlaw caste must stand.

Last night's vote means the Bill will now return to the House of Commons (possibly tomorrow) with the amendment intact for MPs to vote again.

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, commented:

"We are delighted that the Lords has reaffirmed the need for legislation, rather than kick the issue into the long grass as the Government and the majority of the Commons seems more inclined to do. 'Informal conciliation' is obviously no match for such deep-seated discrimination that ruins people's lives, as the Government is proposing, perhaps in deference to high caste (and high influence) Hindus.

"We urge peers to keep up the pressure on the elected house which will be anxious to resolve this issue in the next fortnight to avoid the entire Bill being lost when this Parliamentary session ends."

[Read the debate in full at Hansard](#)

For further details on this issue, please see our [briefing on caste discrimination](#) (pdf).

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