

challenging religious privilege

21 March 2016

national  
secular  
society

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
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## **RE: Fixing the date of the Easter public holiday**

Dear Mr Javid,

Schools, parents and businesses are all unnecessarily inconvenienced by the fluctuating date of the Easter public holiday. We urge you to take the necessary action to remedy this. The Local Government Association and the Family and Childcare Trust have both [expressed support](#) for a fixed Easter school holiday at the least.

While it is welcome that both Anglican and Catholic churches favour a fixed date, we are also conscious that some religious leaders from various Christian denominations have discussed the need to find a common date, but this process, if it is ever complete, could take decades. The theological issues are very complex, and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow is reported to “have been particularly opposed to discussing such a possibility” according to the [National Catholic Register](#). This suggests that the Eastern rights churches, whose date for Easter differs from the other churches, is unlikely to accept change in the foreseeable future. We hope that the Prime Minister will seek to avoid a change to a fixed date in the non-Eastern rite churches being delayed indefinitely because of long-standing theological differences.

Responding to a parliamentary question on the matter from the Rt Hon Sir Greg Knight MP, on 24 March 2015, Jo Swinson said there was “no indication that the Churches are keen to move to a date for Easter fixed in accordance with the Easter Act 1928.”

However, we note that since then the Archbishop of Canterbury has [suggested](#) that there is such a willingness and that Easter could be set for the second or third Sunday of April. Pope Francis has also said Christian leaders “have to come to an agreement” about changing the date.

Until the date is fixed, this shifting date will continue to cause unnecessary disruption. I would therefore be keen to understand what the Government’s

intentions are with regard to remedying this. As you will know, the Easter Act 1928 fixed the holiday as “the first Sunday after the second Saturday in April”. Given the consensus that does already exist we urge you to consider resolving the matter by implementing the Easter Act, without necessarily waiting for agreement from all major Christian denominations.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Porteous Wood', written in a cursive style.

Keith Porteous Wood  
Executive Director