

This week in Parliament the Government introduced a Bill that would establish a recall mechanism for MPs who have been found guilty of wrongdoing or misconduct. The proposal for legislation was included in all three party manifestoes at the 2010 General Election and following some intense pre-legislative scrutiny and consultation has now started its formal process through Parliament.

I have to put my hands up and say that initially I was not in favour of recall legislation. My view was very much that the electorate already have a method of recall through their democratic right to vote or not vote for them at the General Election. However I can appreciate why, following the scandals over expenses in particular, this view was a minority one. So having conceded the need for recall, I joined a Committee of MPs, led by my fabulous colleague Zac Goldsmith, to ensure that if we have recall we at least do it properly.

That is why I am now a fully-fledged member of the “real recall” brigade! The legislation that is in front of Parliament at the moment effectively allows MPs to be judge and jury on whether another MP has committed misconduct or wrong doing and should face recall. I do not believe that this is acceptable to the public, who want to be able to decide for themselves whether their MP has done anything wrong. The amendments will return the right of recall to constituents but with stipulations which will prevent vexatious petitions.

An MP is never going to vote the way all their constituents want them to do but that should not be a trigger of recall. However misconduct and wrong doing in any other workplace would be a sackable or disciplinary matter, and MPs should not be exempt from that. Real recall will ensure that it is the people, not politicians, who are judge and jury. If we can't trust the people, why should they trust us? A new dawn is breaking.