

On Tuesday 15th January 2013, George Eustice MP presented a Westminster Hall Debate discussing Party Political Broadcasts in which he argued that there were advantages to shortening the length of broadcasts whilst increasing their frequency. Mr Eustice highlighted that current regulations restrict PPBs at either 2' 40'', 3'40'' or 4'40'', and that there is an argument that permitting Political Parties to transmit shorter broadcasts of approximately 1 minute would allow a clearer political message to be conveyed to potential voters. He argued against the viewpoint that shortened PPBs would become political adverts and thus have negative connotations, instead stating that political advertising to an adult population should not be considered controversial so long as it is not linked to difficult issues of funding and 'paid-for' advertising that could allow political parties with more wealth considerable advantage. He further argued that examples from other countries who allow a hybrid system of political broadcasts and political advertising should be noted, such as in Australia, and that somewhat contentious American political advertising would not fit our political system. Instead by shortening the length of PPBs it would be more likely that the public would 'stay tuned' to them and by increasing their frequency it would be more likely that the public would actually see them. PPBs are still an important medium to transmit political ideas to the public especially with the decline in newspaper circulation and this has been illustrated by previous Ofcom investigations such as the paper 'Viewers and Voters' published in 2005 which stated that 70% of respondents had found Party Election Broadcasts as either 'quite' or 'very' important. Mr Eustice finished his debate by arguing that political broadcasting has become too fixed on process and strategy, and that this skews the public view of politicians and their ultimate aim of saying what they actually believe.