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Press**STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON AN ELECTIONS REVIEW**

The right to vote is the foundation of our liberties in a democracy. And it is the duty of democratic governments to ensure that elections are free and fair. I take the allegations I have heard about electoral abuse in Northern Ireland very seriously. I have decided therefore to establish an internal review to investigate the allegations and to recommend ways of improving Northern Ireland's electoral system.

I want voters in Northern Ireland to write to me or the Review Team with their concerns, any evidence they have of electoral abuse, and their suggestions for improvements. Stealing and inventing votes is plainly wrong, and we already do a great deal to ensure that it doesn't happen. But we must find out the facts so that we can see if there is anything else we can do.

The review will make an initial report to me by November and I expect to be able to make an announcement about its findings and provisional recommendations then. After that the review will continue to look at other aspects of the electoral system and a complete and final package of recommendations will be announced early next year.