

NationalWorld's #PartTimeParliament investigation reveals full extent of MPs' commitments outside of parliament during the pandemic

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NationalWorld, part of JPIMedia, has carried out an exclusive in-depth analysis of the Register of Members' Financial Interests dating back to the start of 2020.

Amidst the current row over how MPs are held accountable for their outside interests, our investigation found:

- **MPs collectively earned approximately £10m during the pandemic as a result of commitments outside of parliament**
- **148 MPs have 'second jobs' outside of parliament with some dedicating the equivalent of more than two days' work per week outside of parliament**
- **Around one in six MPs are landlords, and collectively they have earned somewhere between £2.9m and £4.4m from rent during the pandemic***

Parliamentarians have received payments of approximately £10m between January 2020 and August 2021 from work outside of their role as MP during this time, and around one in three MPs has carried out some outside work during this time, rising to more than 40% when including paid opinion surveys. Commitments range from lucrative speeches and consultancy work to newspaper columns, paid TV appearances and publishing.

The analysis reports on total time spent on outside work by MPs during the pandemic, who are the biggest earners and highlights a number of potential conflicts of interest.

Readers will also be able to access a searchable database to check whether their MP had any second jobs or outside earnings during the pandemic, and there will be exclusive polling from Survation showing public attitudes on the issue.

NationalWorld politics and investigations reporter Ethan Shone said: "Based on our discussions with academics, current and former MPs, plus submissions to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's review on the subject, we believe that the system around MPs' outside interests is in need of significant reform.

"As such, we are calling for the introduction of limits on the amount of outside work that MPs can take on, the amount they can earn from outside work and for greater transparency.

“We are also calling for a ban on MPs working as political consultants in roles which do or could reasonably be thought to offer insight into, or influence over, goings on in government.”

NationalWorld data and investigations editor Harriet Clugston said: “I spend my working life scrutinising data from government departments, all of which is covered by rigorous rules to ensure consistency, transparency and accuracy – everything that is lacking from the data on our elected representatives themselves.

“Instead, we are met with obfuscation and ambiguity. NationalWorld’s reporters have spent months painstakingly building a usable database to try to paint a comprehensive picture of MPs’ extensive collective financial interests and work commitments.

“It’s a disgrace that we have had to do this at all.

“The results raise serious questions about the flagrant disrespect and half-heartedness with which some MPs are treating their important roles representing constituents.

“The British public deserve better than part-time parliamentarians – and we hope Parliament takes notice.”

NationalWorld Editor Nick Mitchell said: “When we launched NationalWorld, one of our stated aims was quite simply to hold power to account. The ‘Part Time Parliament’ investigation is a prime example of this basic journalistic principle.

“While most of us are vaguely aware that MPs take on additional paid work outside of their parliamentary duties, the scale of this has never been fully revealed until now.

“Through meticulous data analysis, the NationalWorld investigative team has shed new light on the many outside commitments that MPs pursue. It’s time to rein this in and have politicians who are fully focused on their duties as our elected representatives.”

Lord Evans, Chair of the Independent Committee on Standards in Public Life welcomed the investigation and the need to make the Register of Members’ Financial Interests more accessible, searchable and usable to give the public the opportunity to consider whether an individual’s interests could influence their views.

Rose Whiffen, Research Officer at Transparency International UK said that while MPs are elected to represent their constituents in Westminster, being employed by private companies raises questions over whose interests they are really serving and greater transparency over MPs’ outside interests allows the press and public to scrutinise any potential conflicts.

Tom Brake, former MP and director of Unlock Democracy, said: “I welcome NationalWorld’s very detailed analysis. Their research demonstrates quite how extensive the phenomenon of double-jobbing MPs is and how many constituents are being short-changed.”

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