

Fianna Fáil Policy Guide

Introduction

A fundamental element of Fianna Fáil’s renewal will be based on the quality of the solutions we offer. The challenges our country faces will not be overcome with false promises, media spin, or populist slogans. They will only be overcome by credible policies that offer real solutions for the people of Ireland.

Every member has a role to play in the process of our policy renewal, a process which is underway. Members should be encouraged to contribute to policy formulation and we should all be aware of our Party’s policy positions, and we should all communicate them.

The efforts of grassroots members and supporters will be vital to ensure that Fianna Fáil remains at the heart of communities across the country. This guide has been prepared with that in mind. Please read it, and use it.

It contains some of our key achievements during our time in Government. It also contains information about our policy positions, and some of the Bills we have introduced in the Oireachtas. Finally, it contains information about Fine Gael and Labour’s broken promises, following their deeply cynical election campaigns last year.

More detailed policy papers are available from our Policy and Research Unit in Leinster House.

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Contents

- 2** Fianna Fáil Achievements 1997-2011
- 8** Policy Positions
- 17** Bills Introduced By Fianna Fáil in Opposition
- 21** Fine Gael & Labour’s Broken Promises

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Fianna Fáil Policy Achievements 1997 – 2011

Fine Gael, Labour and Sinn Féin have sought to undermine and diminish the advances our nation made during our time in office. However, despite the current difficulties, Fianna Fáil oversaw a transformation in the facilities, outlook and expectations of our country.

✓ **Achieved Peace in Northern Ireland**

- We have overseen historic developments including the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the Hillsborough Agreement in February 2010 which led to the devolution of policing and justice powers from London to Belfast

✓ **Delivered More Jobs**

- The greatest economic achievement since the mid-1990s has been the sustained increase in the numbers employed, with over 400,000 more people working when we left office than in 1997.
- Numbers in employment at end 2010 were at around 1.85 million, even after the global economic crisis.

✓ **Sustained Foreign Direct Investment**

- By the time we left Government, we were the number one in the world for jobs created by Foreign Direct Investment. The IFSC employed over 30,000 at the end of 2010, up from 5,000 in 1997
- FDI supported approx 240,000 jobs directly and indirectly.
- Eight of the top 10 high-tech and pharmaceutical firms and 15 of the top 20 medical devices firms were based in Ireland.

✓ **Built an Export-Based Economy**

- Irish exports in 2010 reached the highest level ever at €161 billion, representing growth of 6.7% on the previous year.
- We were the world's second largest exporter of computer and IT services – behind only India and ahead of Germany, the UK and the United States.
- In financial services, €1.7 trillion of funds are administered here.

✓ **Introduced a Favourable Corporate Tax Regime**

- We introduced, and fought to maintain, our Corporate Tax regime, despite pressure to end it.
- The 12.5% rate is rightly credited as a key factor for our success in attracting the thousands of companies investing here from abroad.

✓ **Made Ireland a Good Place to do Business**

- By the end of 2010, Ireland was ranked 9th out of 183 countries in the world by the World Bank in terms of ease of doing business.
- In 2011, IBM named Ireland the top destination in the world for foreign direct investment in terms of the value of the projects and investment it attracts.

✓ **Invested in the Innovation Fund and the Smart Economy**

- Fianna Fáil in Government set up a €500 million Innovation Fund to support enterprise development and job creation by drawing top venture capitalists to Ireland.
- We produced “Trading and Investing in the Smart Economy” in September 2010, which aimed to generate 150,000 jobs and boost exports by one third.
- Fianna Fáil can be proud of our record in investment in Research & Development which has enhanced small and medium businesses most of which are exporting goods.
- In 2000 we set up Science Foundation Ireland and since then Ireland has ascended the international rankings of research capability from a position of 36th in 2003 to the top 20 in 2008.

✓ **Built a World Renowned Education System**

- Pupil teacher ratios went from 24:1 to 16:1 from 1997 to 2011.
- In 1997, there were 100,204 full time students enrolled in higher education institutions in Ireland. This had risen to 159,056 in 2010, a 59% increase.
- At end 2010, there were 10,543 SNAs in place, compared with just 250 in 1997.

✓ **Developed a Highly Skilled Workforce**

- The Irish labour force is among the best educated in the world; the share of population aged 25-34 with a third level qualification is higher than in the US or the UK, and is above the OECD average.
- We were 4th in the world in terms of skilled labour and 6th for labour productivity by the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2010.

✓ **Achieved Massive Improvements in Health**

- We have made major strides in tackling cancer with survival rates for almost all types of cancer having improved, developing a National Cancer Control Programme, and national cancer screening programmes such as CervicalCheck and BreastCheck.
- The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), which purchases treatment for public patients, had treated almost 170,000 patients up to the end of 2010.
- The WHO ranked Ireland 19th out of 191 countries for its Health system in 2010.

✓ **Ensured a Better Quality of Life**

- In 2010, the life expectancy at birth for men in Ireland was 78.7 years, and for women was 83.2 years. This represents an increase of 5.3 years for men and 4.5 years for women since 1997.
- We introduced the Tobacco Ban in work places, which has improved quality of life for workers and consumers and highlighted the dangers of smoking.
- In 2003, we established the Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA) to drive quality & patient safety in our health services.

✓ **Prioritised Children**

- We introduced the free pre-school year, with 66,000 children benefitting from it, and increased Child Benefit.
- We reformed children and family services in the HSE and recruited an extra 200 social workers in 2010 to support

the provision of every child in care with a social worker.

- We made the building of the National Children’s Hospital a priority.

✓ **Protected the Elderly**

- State pensions were protected in successive budgets.
- We increased the number in receipt of home help services to 54,000 in 2010.
- We introduced the Fair Deal Nursing Home Support Scheme to ease financial pressures on thousands of families all over Ireland.
- In 2010, those aged 65 could expect to live almost 4 years longer than those aged 65 in 1997.

✓ **Transformed Our Transport Network**

- Over €8 billion was invested in our local and national road network during our time in Government.
- We upgraded the M50 and completed the major inter-urban roads programme – 750km of motorway linking Dublin with the principal cities in the country, reducing journey times, increasing the reliability of journeys and improving road safety.
- We significantly expanded rail services, including commuter services and completed phase one of the Western Rail Corridor.
- The Irish Rail fleet was overhauled, we introduced the Luas, and bus services were expanded massively.

✓ **Made our Roads Safer**

- Thanks to our strict enforcement of road safety legislation, we now have one of the best road safety records in the EU.
- Road deaths have fallen by almost 50% from 1997 to 2010.
- Random Breath Testing was introduced.

✓ **Introduced Ground-breaking Anti-Crime Legislation**

- We took action to tackle gangland crime head on, introducing major pieces of legislation to help Gardaí catch and prosecute criminals.

- The number of Gardaí jumped by almost 40% from 1997 to 14,600 in 2011. In the same time, we built almost 2,000 prison places.

✓ **Ensured a Fairer Society**

- We introduced Civil Partnership.

✓ **Protected Our Environment**

- We invested some €1 billion in water supply infrastructure under the Water Services Investment Programme between 2000 and 2009.
- We focussed on creating thousands of jobs in the areas of smart meters, smart networks, electric vehicles, wind energy, home insulation and green technology.
- The quality of our rivers improved following investment in sewerage systems.
- We introduced the plastic bag tax.

✓ **Invested in our Energy & Communications Infrastructure**

- We oversaw increasing liberalisation of the energy market which drove down costs, including the creation of the single energy market.
- Energy efficiency was a priority and we invested in the Warmer Homes Scheme and the Building Energy Rating Scheme.
- We delivered a €223 million National Broadband Scheme – one of the first countries in the world to do so.

✓ **Invested in Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Communities**

- We consistently supported agriculture and fisheries. By end 2010, the sector saw €7 billion in exports, accounting for over half of manufacturing exports by Irish owned firms.
- We produced Food Harvest 2020 which recognised agriculture and the agri-food industry as key to our economic recovery. The document represents the road map for the industry for the next 10 years.

✓ **Protected the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht**

- We enacted the Official Language Act, set up the Office of the Language Commissioner, established Forás na Gaeilge, expanded the provision of 3rd level education through Irish, and published the 20 Year Strategy.
- We succeeded in making Irish a working language of the EU.
- We provided significant funding for the Gaeltacht and Islands for dealing with the infrastructure deficit.

Policy Positions

As you meet members of the public, it is important that you are aware of our policy positions. The below are a few of Fianna Fáil's positions in key areas, and associated Party messages. More detailed policy documents are available from our Policy and Research Unit.

Finance

Budget 2012

- When this Fine Gael/Labour Government came to office last March, the Budget for the year had already been passed for them, despite their trenchant opposition to it.
- Now, they will be judged on their actions, and their political choices.
- They have now introduced a socially regressive budget. Its impact will be felt hardest by low and middle income families with children, by young people with disabilities, by vulnerable elderly people, by those in rural communities, and by students trying to build a better future.
- The frontloading of the VAT increase of 2% will cost jobs.
- They performed a dramatic u-turn on their pledges to ban upward-only rent reviews, representing yet another broken promise.

Personal Insolvency Bill/ Helping Mortgage Holders

- We have published comprehensive personal insolvency legislation that effectively deals with the major problems of both unsecured and mortgage debt.
- Fianna Fáil published a Bill to establish a Debt Settlement and Mortgage Resolution Office which would provide an independent, non-judicial debt settlement system for persons struggling with personal debt and those in difficulties with their mortgage.
- We also published the Family Home Bill and the Regulation of Debt Management Advisors Bill.

Croke Park/Public Service Retirements

- The first annual review of the Croke Park Agreement last year

showed that employees in the public service, the trade unions together with management have brought about substantial savings, efficiencies and reform in the running of the public and civil service.

- The main challenge now is to ensure that frontline services are protected and the public is not made to suffer reduced or impaired services.
- Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly clear that they are failing to achieve this balance – the HSE has said that the biggest impediment to the safe delivery of health services this year is the availability of staff.
- The Early Retirement Scheme is being mismanaged by the Government, and frontline services are bound to suffer.

Fiscal Compact Treaty

- Fianna Fáil consistently called for a Referendum on the Fiscal Compact Treaty. We believe the people should be consulted. Our core principle was that the Treaty should not damage the democratic legitimacy of the European Union with the Irish people.
- The Government should not have waited for the legal advice before proceeding with the Referendum. It is a pity that ministers did everything they could to avoid having a referendum.
- The Fiscal Compact adds to the checks and balances against mismanagement introduced last year at EU level.
- We have sought and have received clarification on Corporation Tax and the other protocols attached to the Lisbon Treaty.
- For these reasons, we support the Fiscal Compact and will be advocating a Yes vote.

Jobs & Enterprise

Tackling Unemployment

- The average rate of unemployment in the past 12 months during which the Government has been in office is 14.2%, as opposed to 13.7% the year before.
- There are now almost 440,000 people on the Live Register, with more than half of them being unemployed for more than a year.

- That is approximately the same figure as at the start of 2011.
- According to the best estimate, at least 77,000 people have emigrated during the past 12 months.
- Budget 2012 contained many anti-business measures. For example, the retail sector is being hit hard by the Government's decision to front-load a 2% VAT increase this year. This will inevitably lead to job losses in the coming months.
- Their cuts to the Capital Programme have cost 9000 jobs.
- The raid on the private pension fund was very unfair and has not delivered the jobs it was expected to do.

Action Plan on Jobs

- The plan contains a significant lack of imagination and focuses more on organisational changes rather than stimulus measures to create jobs.
- It included announcements of what was already in place. There has been no new funding announced alongside this plan and most worrying is the lack of any specific job creation target for 2012.
- Dissolving the 35 city and county enterprise boards and establishing a new network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in each Local Authority appears to be an unnecessary exercise in optics that will disrupt the system that could simply be strengthened and provided with additional funding.
- Our pre-budget submission showed how Government could provide extra support for city and county enterprise boards.

Our Strategy to Deal With the Jobs Crisis

- Fianna Fáil's proposals for Budget 2012 do not include the 2% VAT increase.
- Fianna Fáil has focused on targeted measures to stimulate the domestic economy in order to create jobs:
 - ✓ Pension fund levy reform,
 - ✓ Increased capital expenditure,
 - ✓ Ability to pay clause in commercial rates and
 - ✓ Small business stimulus measures.

- We believe the focus of taxation measures should be on reducing tax expenditures and broadening the tax base.
- We believe that restoring the public finances and prioritising supports for the enterprise sector provide the essential bedrock upon which recovery will be built.
- Restoring confidence for investors and consumers will have a very direct positive impact on job creation.

Health

Budget cuts

- Despite the spin about prioritising and reforming health services, Minister for Health James Reilly is taking more than €750 million out of the health budget in 2012.
- Frontline services are bound to suffer in the face of such a massive cut.
- In the last year there has been a 47% increase in those waiting greater than 6 months for surgery.
- There will be a further reduction of staff employed in our health service and on top of this the Government expects a 10% reduction in overtime and allowances.
- The volume of services will be reduced and there will be a trebling of the waiting times for procedures (from 3 to 9 months).
- The oldest, the sickest and the most vulnerable will be hit hardest.

National Children's Hospital

- The Government must ensure that the Children's Hospital proceeds even if it requires emergency legislation.
- The needs of sick children and the provision of world class facilities must be our top priority.
- This is especially true in light of ever expanding numbers of children on waiting lists and overcrowding in the A&Es of children's hospitals with some waiting over 24hours for treatment.

Closures to Community Nursing Units

- It seems to be Fine Gael and Labour policy to close all public

beds for the elderly and to bring an end to community hospitals, with almost 900 beds and multiple community nursing units to close this year.

- There does not seem to be a plan to deal with these closures. It represents an attack on public services to the elderly.
- We believe that a comprehensive plan for the sector needs to be developed, not ad hoc closures causing anxiety and distress to patients in these facilities.

Increasing Insurance Costs & Universal Health Insurance

- Fine Gael & Labour's plans to introduce universal health insurance are in chaos. There is no White Paper, no costing, and no plan.
- There are huge hidden costs in the UHI model of healthcare. The last thing our health service needs now is a structural overhaul, especially if it is towards privatised healthcare.
- Meanwhile, policy holders are abandoning private health insurers due to increasing prices, driven heavily by the Government's actions (increasing the insurance levy, increasing VAT).
- This is causing increased strain on an already overstretched public system. Measures proposed in the budget will only exacerbate the crisis.

Education

Cuts to small schools

- Fine Gael and Labour unfairly targeted rural communities in Budget 2012 meaning they will bear a disproportionate cost of decisions taken.
- The decision to introduce phased adjustments at primary level in 2012 to staffing schedules for 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools will lead to a dramatic increased pupil teacher ratio in rural primary schools leading to large numbers of closures and amalgamations.
- The protection of small rural schools has been a critical issue for Fianna Fáil.

Cuts to DEIS

- Only 235 of the current 428 posts in DEIS schools will be retained.

- This means that children at disadvantaged schools are still facing larger class sizes and cuts in support from September
- We have called on the Government to reverse what is the most regressive and unfair budget cut for many years.
- Numerous independent reports have shown DEIS to be working and having a hugely positive impact on literacy and numeracy.

Third Level Fees

- Fine Gael and Labour took a number of decisions in Budget 2012 that will restrict the ability of young people and the unemployed to go on to third level.
- The Government announced that it intends to increase the student contribution fee by €250 in 2012 and abolish supports for postgraduate students entering college next year.
- Labour is the party who said a year ago that they would “*reverse the €500 increase in the Student Services Charge*” and that it was “*opposed to third-level fees by either the front or back doors*”.

Environment

Septic Tanks

- Fianna Fáil fully supports securing clean water across the countryside.
- We accept the need for a registration system for private waste water systems.
- However we believe that there should be no registration or appeals fee, and that a grant system for upgrades should be put in place.
- We still do not know what standards are going to be applied during inspections.
- The recent reduction in the registration charge to €5 is a political stroke by Minister Hogan designed to distract from the major issue of Septic Tank upgrade costs.
- It also highlights the potentially unsustainable financing of the inspection schemes.

Household charge

- A property tax was part of the EU/IMF agreement and the interim charge was included in our 4 year plan and 2012 budget submission.
- Fianna Fáil believes that the introduction of an interim property tax before the establishment of a full site valuation charge should be subject to a series of exemptions for those under severe financial pressure.
- Legislation should exempt those struggling to make ends meet, such as those with high level of mortgage arrears, negative equity, welfare dependency and persons who paid stamp duty.

Social Welfare

- Fianna Fáil continues to emphasise the need for a safety net for the most vulnerable in society and those affected by the economic crisis.
- The advances we made across social welfare programs should be protected.
- The changed European context and prospects for EU support for bank re-capitalisation means that we should be in a position to save money on the banks that we can use to protect those affected by the crisis.
- Government emphasis should be placed upon further anti-fraud savings and job creation to reduce social expenditure.

Foreign Affairs

The Vatican Embassy Closure

- Fianna Fáil is opposed to the closure of the Vatican embassy. We believe that our foreign relations should reflect shared values and that closing the embassy will save very little in monetary terms when compared to the lost diplomatic opportunities it entails.
- Government Ministers and TDs are attempting to play both sides of the argument by declaring they are against the closure and calling for a review.

- At a time of strained relations with the Vatican what is needed is more diplomacy, not less, to repair relations.
- The Vatican embassy represents one of Ireland's oldest diplomatic ties of the state with a diplomatic presence to the Holy See being established there in 1929 when the Vatican City state as it exists today was first founded.

Political Reform

- The Electoral Amendment Political Funding Bill 2011 states that Political parties will face a cut of half their State political funding if they do not have at least 30% women and 30% men candidates at the next general election. This will then rise to 40% after a further 7 years.
- Breaking the link between business and politics is an integral part of Fianna Fáil's vision of a renewed politics for Ireland.
- We have launched our own bill on Political Funding which, combined with our bill on the mandatory registering of lobbyists, aims to restore public trust in the integrity of the political process.
- We are setting out a more active approach to encouraging balanced political participation that is not solely limited to quotas.

The Irish Language & the Gaeltacht

- A commitment to the use and promotion of the Irish language is a central tenet of Fianna Fáil policy.
- Fianna Fáil has a proud record on delivering for the Gaeltacht and has made unprecedented levels of investment in the Gaeltacht.
- We supported the Irish language as a community language in the Gaeltacht and transformed the infrastructure of the Gaeltacht and the islands.
- Unlike Fine Gael and Labour, we are committed to retaining the enterprise function of Údarás, recognising that keeping our national language alive requires active employment in Gaeltacht regions and continued creation of new jobs.

Legislation Introduced by Fianna Fáil in Opposition

Following the election, Fianna Fáil committed to providing credible solutions and policies to take us out of the current difficulties. We have introduced 20 major pieces of legislation since last February on a range of issues which we brought forward in that spirit. This compares with Sinn Féin who have introduced just 3 Bills in the same period. Below is our list of the Bills we have introduced in the Oireachtas while in opposition.

1. Electoral (Amendment) (Political Donations) Bill

Bill to restrict the making of donations for political purposes by companies, trade unions, societies or building societies, to amend the law relating to the disclosure of donations to political parties and individuals, to provide for the auditing of the accounts of political parties and to implement the recommendations relating to political funding contained within the Second Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into Payments to Politicians

2. Registration of Wills Bill

Bill to provide for the extension of the Civil Registration Service to the registration of certain information regarding wills and for those purposes to revise the law relating to the Civil Registration Service and to provide for related matters

3. Mobile Phone Radiation Warning Bill

Bill to provide that a warning label shall be affixed to the exterior casing of mobile phones and on related packaging, which shall state clearly that mobile phones emit electromagnetic radiation

4. Twenty-Ninth Amendment of the Constitution (No. 3) Bill

Bill to deal with the adoption of children in cases of parental failure and adoption of children of marriage.

5. Family Home Bill

Bill to prohibit the granting of a court order for the possession of a family home except in circumstances where the court has been presented with a verifiable, detailed and independent analysis of the repayment capacity of the family home owner, and where the court has had an opportunity to review the original mortgage application, and consideration is given to a range of alternative actions that will seek to protect the homeowner's possession of the family home

6. Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill

Bill to make further and better provisions for promoting harmonious relations between workers and employers, to prevent and/or settle trade disputes, to provide principles and policies to which a Joint Labour Committee must have regard when formulating proposals to submit to the Labour Court for Employment Regulation Orders, to provide for the making of an Employment Regulation Order by the Minister.

7. Regulation of Debt Management Advisors Bill

Bill to make provision in relation to debt management advisors and for the authorisation and supervision of debt management advisors by the Central Bank of Ireland and the Minister for Finance and to provide for related matters

8. Debt Settlement And Mortgage Resolution Office Bill

Bill to reform the law on personal insolvency; to provide for a non-judicial debt settlement arrangement process concerning personal debt; to provide for a non-judicial mortgage resolution order concerning mortgages over family homes; to provide for a debt relief order for personal debt where a debt settlement arrangement or bankruptcy is not appropriate; to reform the law on the enforcement of personal debt, including individual enforcement mechanisms; to provide for the establishment of a debt enforcement office, which includes a debt settlement and mortgage resolution office; to provide for the licensing and

regulation of personal insolvency trustees and debt collection undertakings; and to provide for related matters

9. Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland (Amendment) Bill

Bill to make provision to empower the Financial Services Ombudsman to report on investigations and adjudications of regulated financial service providers arising from consumer complaints made about the conduct of regulated financial service providers

10. Advertising, Labelling and Presentation of Fast Food at Fast Food Outlets Bill

Bill to make provision for rules governing the advertising, labelling and presentation of fast food at fast food outlets

11. 29th Amendment to the Constitution (Corporate Donations) Bill

Bill to end Corporate Donations to political parties and reform political donations

12. Local Authority Public Administration Bill

Bill to compel local authorities to provide members of the public and public representatives with substantive replies to written communications within a prescribed period of time

13. NAMA and Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Transparency Bill

Bill to provide that, in the interests of transparency, all relevant details of loans, properties, or other assets offered for sale by or with the approval of NAMA or the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation be available to the public by means of publication on a website

14. Corporate Manslaughter Bill

Bill entitled an Act to create the indictable offence of corporate

manslaughter by an undertaking, to create the indictable offence of grossly negligent management causing death by a high managerial agent of the undertaking, and to provide for related matters

15. Criminal Justice (Aggravated False Imprisonment) Bill

Bill entitled an Act to amend the provisions of the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 to provide for the creation of the statutory offence of Aggravated False Imprisonment (tiger kidnappings)

16. Register of Lobbyists Bill

The Bill seeks to give effect to the recommendations of the OECD on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying 2010 and to provide for an effective and fair framework for transparent and open access to the development and implementation of public policy. The Bill provides for (a) the Standards in Public Office Commission to operate as the Registrar of Lobbyists, (b) the registration of lobbyists, (c) the filing of returns by lobbyists, (d) public access to those returns, (e) codes of conduct for lobbyists and (f) related matters

17. Spent Convictions Bill

The Bill is aimed at addressing a significant gap in our present arrangements. It takes account of an insightful report in 2007 from the Law Reform Commission on spent convictions.

18. Health (Professional Care) Bill

The Bill would amend the Health Act 2007 to provide for the regulation of professional home care.

19. Employment Equality (Amendment) Bill

This Bill aims to further copper fasten equality legislation by ensuring individuals cannot be discriminated against when applying for jobs in religious institutions. It maintains the right

of the institutions in protecting their ethos when selecting and maintaining staff but prevents discrimination on sexual orientation or civil status grounds.

20. Entrepreneur Visa Bill

The Bill aims to establish an employment based immigrant visa for entrepreneurs from outside the jurisdiction of the EEA who have received significant capital from investors to establish a business in the republic of Ireland.

Broken Promises

The ever growing list of broken promises by Fine Gael and Labour is proof that in the General Election they engaged in auction politics of a most cynical nature. People can see the arrogance involved in how they have handled issues like Roscommon hospital or the burning of bondholders. They see the sheer cynicism of a new Government taking only days to abandon promises. Below are some of their most shameful u-turns.

Economy & Public Sector Reform

Income Tax

- The programme for Government was clear in ruling out income tax increases “the new government...will maintain the current rates of income tax together with bands and credits.”
- Enda Kenny said “There will not be any income tax increases in the budget.”(June 16th, Govt. Press conference), and it was a key element of FG’s “Five Point Plan.”
- However, it has emerged that there will be changes to income tax bands and credits in Budget 2013. This was outlined in documents provided by the Government to the European Commission and which were leaked to the German Bundestag.

Universal Social Charge

- The Programme for Government states: “We will review the Universal Social Charge”.
- No review is forthcoming; Noonan robustly defends the levy in the Dáil saying the “universal social charge is progressive.”

Standard rate of VAT

- Fine Gael’s pre budget submission in December last year proposed increasing the standard rate of VAT to 22% in 2012 and 23% in 2013.
- During the election Labour took out a full paid ad in the national

newspapers expressing its opposition to the VAT increase.

- In Government, they hiked VAT to 23% in the budget.

Budget 2011

- FG & Labour voted against Budget 2011.
- Now it seems they're only too happy to take ownership of the budget and boast about the adjustments that have been achieved to date.

The EU-IMF Deal

- The EU/IMF deal was a “bad deal for Ireland” according to Eamon Gilmore, and “an obscenity” according to Michael Noonan and that it should be renegotiated.
- After the election, Eamon Gilmore said: “It was never going to be the case that the renegotiation of the agreement was something that was going to be done.”

Banks

Bondholders

- They promised to burn the bondholders: “Is it Labour’s way or Frankfurt way” – Eamon Gilmore; “Fine Gael in Government will force certain classes of bondholders to share in the cost of recapitalising troubled financial institutions” – FG Manifesto.
- In Government, they refuse to impose losses on the €3.5 billion of unsecured, unguaranteed senior bondholders at Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide.

Recapitalisation

- Varadkar said that not another “red cent” would be put into the banks.
- The Central Bank announced in March 2011 that the banks would require €24bn. €19bn of this will be met by the taxpayer by July 2011.

Force Banks to Cut their Interest Rates

- The Programme for Government promised that banks in receipt

of state support would be forced to forego a 25 basis point increase on their variable rate mortgage.

- Despite cuts by the ECB to interest rates, banks are refusing to lower theirs.

Strategic Investment Bank

- The Programme for Government states “We will establish a Strategic Investment Bank”.
- Kenny, September 2011: “A Strategic Investment Bank would be difficult to implement in current market conditions.”

Education

Third Level Fees

- “Labour is opposed to third-level fees by either the front or back doors” – Gilmore.
- Now Education Minister Ruairi Quinn refuses to rule out increased student fees in the future.

Student Services Charge

- Ruairi Quinn & Labour signed a USI election pledge to reverse the €500 increase in the Student Services Charge in Budget 2011.
- He has refused to do so once in Government, and won't rule out increases to it in the future.

Social Welfare

Social Welfare Rates

- The Programme for Government clearly states “We will maintain social welfare rates”
- Budget 2012 introduced reductions in Mortgage interest supplement for those struggling with their mortgages, One Parent family reductions and Back to School Allowance cutbacks hit families struggling to make ends meet hard.

Child Benefit

- During the election campaign Eamon Gilmore identified child

benefit as a red line issue

- Labour's "Every Little Hurts" advertising campaign lambasted Fine Gael for their proposed cuts in the child benefit rates
- Eamon Gilmore made the retention of child benefit rates a precondition for coalition.
- The Program for Government stated that "We will maintain social welfare rates".
- **Budget 2012 cut the rate Child Benefit for the third child and all subsequent children.**

Health

Fair Care & Universal Health Insurance

- FG promised "Fair Care" and Labour promised Universal Health Insurance
- Fair Care has disappeared and in Government the 2 parties have admitted that the insurance proposals will not happen for at least 10 years.

Prescription charges

- James Reilly committed in March this year to abolish the 50c prescription charge: "It's certainly something we've undertaken to do."
- He failed to do so in Budget 2012

Free GP care

- The FG Manifesto promised free GP care "As part of our preparation for UHI, which will gradually deliver Free GP Care for all, we will look at a number of ways to widen access to free GP care as finances permit, including increasing the number of people who have a GP Visit Card
- Failed to implement in Budget 2012

Roscommon Hospital and A&E Departments

- Fine Gael Manifesto: "No A&E services will be withdrawn unless a demonstrably better service is put in place and is seen to work." Fine Gael made a clear commitment during and after the general

election to retain and enhance services at Roscommon Hospital.

- 24-hour emergency care in Roscommon Hospital has been ended, and the Government refuses to rule out further closures in small hospitals.
- Reilly says it will be Winter 2012 before overcrowding in A&Es is solved.

New regional hospital for the North East

- During the election, the five Fine Gael candidates contesting the election in Meath East and Meath West promised that the new regional hospital for the North East will be built within five years.
- This was ruled out by James Reilly in Government.

Jobs & Enterprise

Jobs Budget

- FG promised a Jobs Budget within 100 days.
- The jobs budget then became a mere revenue neutral “jobs initiative”, with no jobs target.
- They can only point to the net creation of 490 jobs as a result of the Jobs Initiative, despite raiding people’s pensions to the tune of €2bn over 4 years.
- It was used merely as a revenue grabbing measure.

Getting People Back to Work

- FG Election Slogan: Let’s Get Ireland Working
- Latest Live Register figures show unemployment rising – the jobs initiative failed, the New Era jobs didn’t materialise, and the Medium Term Fiscal Statement acknowledges unemployment will rise in 2012.

New Era Jobs

- Enda Kenny boasted before the election that “New Era will create over 105,000 jobs.”
- At its launch, there was no mention of jobs it would create, and no mention of cost.

Upward Only Rent Reviews

- The Programme for Govt states: “We will legislate to end upward only rent reviews for existing leases.”
- Government waved the white flag on them in Budget 2012.

State Assets

- Programme for Government: “We will target up to €2 billion in sales of non-strategic state assets.”
- €3bn of assets, strategic or otherwise, will be sold.

Environment & Heritage

Water Charges & Utility Charges

- Labour previously said they would be opposed to the introduction of flat rate water charges “A flat water charge is not something that we’re going to introduce.”
- The Government has now admitted that two charges are on the way by 2013, a flat rate household utility charge (by 2012) and water charges.

Household Charge

- “We’re not in favour of a tax on the family home” – Gilmore before the election.
- July 2011: Phil Hogan announced the introduction of a €100 flat rate household charge which is to be applied to the 1.6 million households in the country.

Stag Hunting

- FG Manifesto: “Fine Gael will reverse the ban on stag hunting”; FG Junior Minister Shane McEntee told the Seanad on 25th Oct that legislation reversing the ban was forthcoming.
- 8th Nov – Kenny spokesperson: McEntee was “expressing an opinion” and there was “no commitment” to reverse the ban.

Turf Cutting

- Fine Gael Manifesto: “It is premature to cease the cutting of turf

for domestic purposes in 2011”; Roscommon TD Frank Feighan said he would “sign in his own blood” the future of turf-cutting.

- 27th Sept: Deenihan signs regulations making turf cutting on Special Areas of Conservation a criminal offence, and allows for the confiscation of turf cutting machinery.

Climate Change

- Programme for Government: “We will publish a Climate Change Bill.”
- This was dropped by Phil Hogan in November 2011.

Justice & Defence

Army Barracks Closures

- Eamon Gilmore explicitly supported the stance of Willie Penrose on army barracks closures, outlining the pivotal role that the barracks played.
- 15th November 2011: The Cabinet voted to close military barracks in Cavan, Clonmel, Castlebar and Mullingar

Garda Numbers

- Shatter said in December 2010 that a reduction in Garda numbers would “obstruct the battle against crime”
- “The job of this Government is to reduce public expenditure, not to increase it. That is as applicable across the justice sector as it is in other sectors.”

Political Reform

Ban on Corporate Donations

- The Programme for Government clearly states “we will introduce the necessary legal and constitutional provisions to ban corporate donations to political parties.”
- The Bill allows corporate donations to continue and Enda Kenny has confirmed that there will be no constitutional ban put to the people.

Severance Pay for Senior Civil Servants

- “There will be no more “golden handshakes” for public servants that have failed to deliver.” according to their manifestos.
- Big payoffs for senior civil servants continue.

Reducing the number of TDs

- FG had previously promised to reduce the number of TDs by 20
- The Electoral Act proposes a cut of as little as 6 TDs.

Junior Ministers

- FG pledged they would cut the number of junior Ministers to 12.
- Once elected they appointed 15 Junior Ministers.

Quangos

- Fine Gael pledged to abolish 145 quangos.
- By end February 2012, they had created 3 times the number of Quangos they abolished.

Ministers' Advisors

- Ministerial advisors will be subject to salary caps
- Most Ministers' advisors have breached the cap.

Transparency in Appointments

- FG and Lab Manifestos: They promised vetting of appointments to state boards by the Oireachtas.
- Party political appointments have been made, without any oversight or transparency.

Freedom of Information

- Programme for Government promised to legislate to restore the Freedom of Information Act.
- No commitment for when legislation will be published on this.



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