

NEC Elections 2021 – Branch Nomination Request Disabled Members General Seat



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Dear Colleague

In 2016 I was proud to lead the successful campaign to secure two reserved seats for Disabled Members on the NEC. I was honoured to be the first person elected to one of those positions in 2017 and to hold the seat 2019.

Since then, I have talked to Disabled Members from every region, service group and self-organised group. I've been contacted me on a weekly, if not daily, basis by members. Some have asked for help, advice or support while others just wanted a chat or thank me for being their voice in our union.

We've made some progress on issues such as PIP, reasonable adjustments and Access to Work which are now priority when UNISON is lobbying government or negotiating with employers. Disability is now a recognised part of the wider policy agenda. Whether it's Brexit, housing or equal pay disability is now considered.

Despite this there is still a long way to go before Disabled Members, and disabled people across society, no longer face discrimination and prejudice every day.

COVID-19 brought new challenges. For example Disabled Members using Direct Payments were struggling to get PPE for their carers until I campaigned for UNISON to lobby the government to change the system.

Some of those affected by long-COVID will meet the Equality Act definition of disability but the government aren't likely to agree. They could even try to change the definition to prevent more people being entitled to protection. We need to be ready for this battle and I believe the experience I gained when working at the Disability Rights Commission means I am the best person to make sure our voices heard.

Other issues such as Disability Hate Crime are still a major concern and the campaign for new legal definition that will mean increased continues. Disabled Members are also worried about the impact of the expected cuts to public services and benefits with many concerned that they could lose their job and the support they rely on. I will always work hard to raise these and other issues, to tackle inequalities and challenge injustice on behalf of Disabled Members.

I successfully lobbied NEC members to secure support for a Scottish Branch motion to deliver a year of the disabled worker, support that is essential if we want the year to be a success.

The Year of the Disabled Worker is a fantastic opportunity to change the way disabled people are portrayed, to recognise the contribution Disabled Members make and to challenge disability discrimination. I am committed to working with Disabled Members from across the country to make the year a success and have already secured the support of several MPs, councillors and media outlets.

Disabled Members know that whoever represents us must always put Disabled Members first. Disabled Members are always my priority.

I've been active in Disabled Members since I joined UNISON and was Branch Disabled Members Officer for nine years. I've been chair of Northern Region Disabled Members for 10 years during which time the group has gone from strength to strength. Before being elected to the NEC I was the Northern Region rep on National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC) for six years during which time I was elected as Deputy Chair once and Chair on two separate occasions. I now represent all Disabled Members on NDMC as part of my NEC position

I previously worked for the Disability Rights Commission and took cases against many organisations including Thomas Cook which led to changes in domestic law and European regulations for disabled people travelling by air. I had a 100% success rate and was the only caseworker to be audited as excellent.

I am humbled by the number of Disabled Members who contact me to tell me they appreciate everything I do on their behalf and grateful for the support I receive in my role on the NEC from so many Disabled Members. I am honoured that so many Disabled Members from every region and nation have contacted me to ask me to stand again and to tell me they want me to continue representing them on the NEC. It is for this is the reason that I am asking your Branch to nominate me for the **Disabled Members General Seat** on the NEC.

I know you may get other nomination requests for this seat but before making a decision I would like to ask you to consider my experience, to talk to Disabled Members, and to think about who you would want on your side if you were disabled.

If you would like me to attend a virtual Branch meeting please contact me by email or through Facebook or Twitter.

Disabled Members need a strong voice on the NEC and I hope I can rely on the support of you and your Branch. I would also like to ask you to consider nominating Neelo Farr for the Disabled Members Female seat. Neelo has been active in Disabled Members for a number of years and I am sure she will work hard to represent disabled women on the NEC. **Nominations can be submitted between 1 February and 5 March using the online portal at www.cesvotes.com/unisonNEC2021.**

Thank you for considering my request.



Angela Hamilton LLB (Hons), MCIPR