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PAGES 4-5

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# Sunday Independent

Vol. 113 No. 21 27 May 2018

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■ **66pc-34pc VOTE IN FAVOUR OF RIGHT TO CHOOSE** ■ **ABORTION LAWS TO BE ENACTED BY YEAR END**

# The power of women



**INSIDE**

NELL McCAFFERTY & Dr CIARA KELLY

**SPECIAL REPORT**

- IVANA BACIK
- GENE KERRIGAN
- EILIS O'HANLON
- BRENDAN O'NEILL
- JODY CORCORAN

Pages 23-31 & 38

■ **Taoiseach hails 'quiet revolution' across Ireland**  
■ **Powerful personal testimonies spark landslide**

**Philip Ryan and Kevin Doyle**

IRELAND has decided by a massive majority to repeal the Eighth Amendment, at once ending a long divisive debate about the availability of abortion services and ushering in a new era of a woman's right to choose.

In a seismic outcome to a contentious referendum, people across the country have voted in record numbers and at an unforeseen scale to remove the controversial constitutional amendment which recognises the equal right to life of the mother and the unborn.

The Government will now introduce legislation which will, among other measures, allow for abortion without restriction up to 12 weeks

of pregnancy without specific indication.

As the scale of the referendum result — Yes 66.4pc to No 33.6pc — became apparent several politicians who opposed the proposal immediately announced they would not oppose the will of the people and would now support the new Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Bill.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar described the astonishing poll result a "quiet revolution" and promised the new legislation would be enacted before the end of the year.

The Taoiseach described the result as: "The day Ireland stepped out from under the last of our shadows and into the light."

"Today, we have a modern Constitution for a modern people."

The emotional victory for women's rights was celebrated the length and breadth of the country as it became clear voters were strongly influenced by the personal stories of those affected by the Eighth Amendment.

An RTE exit poll confirmed the powerful personal testimonies of women who bravely spoke out during the campaign was one of the most influential factors in securing a Yes vote.

Minister for Health Simon Harris, who spearheaded the Government's campaign, said he would seek permission at this Tuesday's Cabinet meeting to immediately begin legislating for abortion.

During emotional scenes at the referendum count centre in Dublin's RDS, Mr Harris said: "Under the Eighth

Amendment, women in crisis pregnancy have been told take the plane, take the boat... today we tell them, take our hand."

The father of the late Savita Halappanavar, who died after being refused a termination, said Irish voters had done justice to his family, and said the new abortion legislation should be called after his daughter.

"We are really, really happy. We have one last request, that the new law, that it is called 'Savita's law'. It should be named for her," Andanappa Yalagi said.

By yesterday afternoon, thousands of Yes voters had gathered in Dublin Castle to celebrate a resounding victory where supporters openly wept

**Continued on page 2**

**BRENDAN O'CONNOR**

## We're all the liberal elite now

THEY said the polls were probably wrong. It could be another Trump or Brexit. It would be closer than we thought. And they were right. The polls were wrong. But it wasn't a shy No that was lurking out there, it was a shy Yes. The people of Ireland did not rebel against the liberal elite. We are all the liberal elite now. Or two-thirds of us, at least.

It used to be that there was this mythical beast called Middle Ireland that was apparently ignored by the wife-swapping sodomites of RTE and the rest of

the liberal D4 media. Middle Ireland was allegedly a place that was more conservative than trendy media types allowed, and its voice was rarely heard. And now and again, the myth went, Middle Ireland would rise up, and its voice would be heard. And it reared up this time alright, but it roared. Yes. It roared for change. Not so much a quiet revolution, as a firm resolution, that whatever their own feelings on abortion, the Eighth was causing too much hurt.

A gay Taoiseach could have been a fluke. And gay marriage a once-off. But now there's a pattern. Women,

men, old and all those young people showed us there is a new Middle Ireland. And it is a Middle Ireland that knows that a gay person in the family, or an abortion, are not things that happen to other people. These are their sons and daughters, their brothers and sisters, their mothers, their friends. And sure we're all liberal when it comes to our own.

The Iona Institute and their gang will blame the media, the politicians, everyone. They like to say their voice is not heard, that they represent a silent majority of conservatives out there. But, it seems, they don't. Their voice was heard this time, but the silent majority disagreed with them. And they will claim it is tyranny by the majority, but it's not. It's just democracy.

But being liberals, we should mind to be tolerant of the one-in-three. They are not bad people. They do

not hate women. They just see things differently. And this will be hard for them. And indeed it's not easy for many of the 70pc either, who agonised over what was the right thing to do. The two-thirds who constitute the liberal elite should try and accord the one-third the same respect liberals accord to all other minorities.

And maybe the old might start according a bit more respect to the young now, too. Let's stop dismissing them as a generation of entitled narcissists. It's their country now. They own the future, so let them shape it. And let them fix the mistakes of their parents, and make their own new mistakes.

It's not a day of triumph for many perhaps, but a day of quiet relief. And it's not over yet. To quote Rita Ann Higgins, "Ireland is changing mother/Tell yourself, tell your sons."

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