

**NO  
TO AV**

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**WHY THE  
REFERENDUM IS  
SO IMPORTANT**



# AV versus First Past the Post

**2.4  
billion**

vote using First Past the Post



**29.5 million**  
vote using AV

# We need your help to win

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The AV referendum on May 5th is one of the most important political events of the year for the Conservative Party. I will be campaigning hard for a 'No' vote – and this booklet provides everything you need to play your part too.

I believe AV is the wrong system for Britain. It is complex, doesn't improve fairness and is used by only three other countries in the world. But my rejection of AV is not a rejection of reform. I know politics has to change – and that's why the Coalition is committed to sweeping reform.

We are making votes fairer - by levelling up the size of the constituencies so that every vote weighs the same. We are making politics cheaper - by cutting the size of Parliament, cutting Ministers' pay and sorting out expenses. We are making politics - and government - more accountable, by removing the Prime Minister's power to set the date of an election, and introducing new rights for constituents to recall MPs who break the rules.

Most importantly of all, we are putting power directly into people's hands. Providing real transparency, so that people know how government works and what it's doing. Creating real engagement, with a new Public Reading Stage for government bills, so that people can directly write legislation. And delivering real empowerment, with decision-making devolved down to mayors, local councils and neighbourhoods, so that people call the shots on the things that matter to them.

From here until polling day, I'll be making my case loudly and clearly: yes, to reforming politics and shifting more power down across the country; but no to AV. And I need you to join me.

Voting reform is not top of many voters' priorities right now, so we're going to have to work incredibly hard to convince people to go and vote on May 5th. We need every Conservative supporter in the country to get out and knock on doors, deliver leaflets, run street stalls and do everything possible to get our message out there. So I'm asking you today to please give this campaign your all. Without your support, Britain could be stuck with an unfair, expensive and discredited voting system for generations to come.



David Cameron



So after everyone ranked the candidates in order of preference, I counted up the first preference votes and no-one got more than 50% – so I eliminated the candidate with the least number of votes, redistributing the second preferences of their voters to the remaining candidates. Again, no candidate got over 50% of the vote so I knocked out the candidate with the next fewest first preferences, redistributing their votes as before. I carried on doing this until one candidate got over 50%. So Emily is our new Form Captain.

But more people voted for me, Miss.

# Why AV is the wrong voting system for Britain

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We have a very strong message to take to the country in this campaign: AV is an unfair, expensive and discredited voting system, that allows the candidate who comes third to win elections.

## Reasons to vote No to AV

- **AV is unfair.** With First Past the Post, everybody gets one vote. But under AV, supporters of extreme parties like the BNP would get their vote counted many times, while people who vote for one of the mainstream candidates would only get their vote counted once.
- **AV doesn't work.** Rather than the candidate who receives the most votes winning the election, the person who finishes third could be declared the winner.
- **AV is expensive.** Calculating the results is a long, complicated process, which would cost the taxpayer millions. It can take days to figure out exactly who has won.
- **AV is discredited.** Whereas First Past the Post is the most widely used system in the world, only 3 countries actually use AV – Fiji, Australia and Papua New Guinea. And in Australia, six out of ten people want to get rid of it.
- **No-one wants it.** Even the 'Yes' campaigners don't actually want AV – they see it as a convenient stepping stone to even more reforms. Many of the Yes campaigners have previously criticised AV.
- **AV is not a proportional system.** The independent commission chaired by the senior Liberal Democrat Roy Jenkins in 1998 concluded that AV was 'even less proportional' than our existing system, and warned that it was 'disturbingly unpredictable'.
- **AV won't fix broken politics.** Changing our voting system to AV won't fix our broken politics. It won't get rid of safe seats or negative campaigning, and it won't make MPs more accountable.

“The most worthless votes for the most worthless candidates”

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL (JUN 1931)

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**THE NEW LEADER OF THE LABOUR PARTY**



**AV**  
**DOESN'T**  
**WORK**

# The facts about the referendum

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The nationwide referendum on 5th May will be the first for 36 years. The public will be asked whether they want to replace our current voting system (sometimes known as First Past the Post) with the so-called ‘Alternative Vote’ (AV).

The referendum on AV was agreed as part of the Coalition Agreement with the Liberal Democrats. Both parties in the Coalition support holding the referendum, but will be campaigning for different outcomes – the Conservatives for a ‘No’ vote, the Lib Dems for a ‘Yes’ vote.

## How the two systems compare

- Under our current system, each voter has one vote. The candidate who gets the most votes wins.
- Under the Alternative Vote, each voter may rank candidates on the ballot paper in order of preference (using 1, 2, 3 etc.). After marking their first choice with a ‘1’, voters have the option to express further preferences for as many – or as few – candidates as they wish. If one candidate has an ‘absolute majority’ (i.e. more than 50 per cent) of the first preferences, he or she is elected. If no candidate has an absolute majority, then the last-placed candidate is eliminated and the ballot papers of anyone who voted for him or her are reallocated according to the next valid preferences on each ballot paper. This may be their second, third, fourth or later preference depending on which candidates remain in the contest. If someone has only voted for a candidate or candidates who have been eliminated, then that ballot paper is discounted and plays no further role in the count. This process continues until a candidate has an absolute majority of the votes which are left in the count, and he or she is elected.

“AV is not a proportional system, the Society does not regard it as suitable for the election of a representative body, e.g. a parliament.”

**ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY, PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL BACKER OF THE YES TO AV CAMPAIGN (2002)**



# Some myths about AV

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## **MYTH – MPs would need to secure at least 50% of the vote under AV**

**REALITY** – Under AV, candidates only get elected with 50% of the votes still remaining in the count – not 50% of the votes in total. Independent academics have predicted that more than 4 out of 10 MPs would be elected with less than 50% support under AV.

## **MYTH – AV would end ‘safe seats’ and ‘jobs for life’.**

**REALITY** – AV would make no difference in over 200 seats where the sitting MP already has 50% of the vote. And it would actually create new safe seats where some voters’ second preferences would regularly prop up another candidate.

## **MYTH – AV would end wasted votes.**

**REALITY** – AV doesn’t solve the ‘problem’ of wasted votes: in a seat won on 51% of an AV vote, 49% of ballots would still be ‘wasted’.

## **MYTH – AV would eliminate the need for tactical voting.**

**REALITY** – AV wouldn’t get rid of tactical voting; it would just make it more complicated, because the order in which candidates are eliminated affects the result. In some cases, voters would be better off not voting to make sure the candidate they disliked didn’t win!

## **MYTH – AV is a proportional system.**

**REALITY** – AV is even less proportional than our current system. In three out of the past four British elections, AV would have produced more disproportionate results than First Past the Post. And in landslide elections like 1997, AV would have dramatically exaggerated the winners’ majority.

## **MYTH – AV shuts the door on extremists such as the BNP.**

**REALITY** – No extremist party has ever won a seat in Parliament under our current system. But AV would give extremists more influence, because it’s the votes of the least popular parties which are the first to be redistributed. So under AV there would be an incentive for mainstream politicians to pander to extremists to try and win their second preferences.

“It is the worst of all worlds”

**WILLIAM HAGUE (FEB 2011)**

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**THE WINNER  
UNDER AV**



1 2 3 4 5 6

# How to campaign

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As with any regular election, we need to know how people plan to vote in order to get our supporters to the polls. Many electors will still not be aware that there is a referendum taking place on our voting system on 5th May so extra effort will be needed to motivate supporters.

Conservative Activists should be using the following campaign activities to raise the profile of the No to AV campaign:

- Street Stalls (see overleaf for guidance)
- Literature Distribution
- Canvassing including door-to-door; survey canvassing; telephone canvassing and email
- Local media
- Local debates

## Merlin

All information is valuable for campaigning and we have added a new column to canvass cards and two new flags have been added to MERLIN so you can help identify firm Yes and No voters.

The new flags are:

- **AVY** for Yes voters
- **AVX** for No voters

A suggested script for canvassing No support in the referendum is:

**Q1** *Have you heard about the referendum being held on 5th May?* [If yes go straight to Q2. If no, explain there will be a ballot on keeping the existing system where everybody has one vote then ask...]

**Q2** *Do you think the current First Past system should be retained?*

[If electors wish to keep the current system mark as **AVX**

If electors want to change the current system from First Past the Post to AV mark **AVY**]

“With AV, politics stays pretty much as it is”

**NEAL LAWSON, CHAIR OF COMPASS**

**& YES TO AV CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR (DEC 2009)**

**You**



**Your  
neighbour**



**Your other  
neighbour**



**Under AV, other people's votes can be counted multiple times while yours is only counted once.**

# Street stalls – a great way to campaign

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Plan to hold at least one street stall in the weeks before polling day to show that the No campaign is active in your area. Choose a prominent location and good time to catch lots of floating voters. Because this is a cross-party campaign, consider inviting non-Conservatives and other activists to join you.

The purpose of the street stall is threefold:

1. To show voters that the No campaign is active in your area
2. To speak to people and tell them about the flaws of the Alternative Vote system
3. To collect the details of supporters and recruit new volunteers

Where can you get street stall materials?

‘No to AV’ posters, balloons, lapel stickers and fliers are all available to order from the Concept website: [www.tpfgroup.co.uk/concept](http://www.tpfgroup.co.uk/concept). There may also be some that you can borrow from your regional campaign centre, so contact your CCHQ Field Director or Field Campaigner to find out more.

Don’t forget to print out lots of copies of the petition form included in this pack so you can sign up new supporters.

Other resources are available to download and print from the No to AV website at [www.no2av.org](http://www.no2av.org)

“If one of the reasons that we want reform is to rebuild public trust and confidence in politics, make MPs more accountable, give more power to people and establish a political and parliamentary system that more reflects the will of the public, then AV doesn’t deliver that.”

**BEN BRADSHAW MP, DIRECTOR OF LABOUR YES TO AV (NOV 2009)**



**Under AV, someone else's fifth preference vote could count as much as your first.**

# Campaigning materials

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A number of templates have been produced so you can campaign for No to AV. There are stand alone items, as well as things to include in your local literature:

- **Picture postcards.** An exciting set of 7 postcards (as featured throughout this booklet) with colourful illustrations of why AV is a bad idea.
- **A template A4 page for your local newsletters (e.g. inTouch or similar).** It includes a reply slip to collect voting intentions as well as information about the way people plan to vote in the referendum. Please flag these both on MERLIN.
- **A survey postcard with ‘5 Good Reasons To Say No to AV’.** Again, this includes a reply slip to collect voting intentions and information about the referendum.
- **A petition form to use on the doorstep, on street stalls, or to give to your members and activists to take into their workplace, etc.** Please return these to CCHQ at the address given on the form.
- **A template letter for MPs, councillors or council candidates to send to local residents explaining why they are voting No.** Why not enclose a copy of the survey postcard with each letter?

All the leaflets and templates are available from:

[www.tpfgroup.co.uk/concept](http://www.tpfgroup.co.uk/concept)

[www.conservatives.com/ac](http://www.conservatives.com/ac)

“Settling for AV is a pure politicians’ fix.”

PAM GIDDY, CHAIR OF THE YES TO AV STEERING COMMITTEE (MAY 2010)



**David Cameron:** "AV is an unfair, expensive and discredited system, that allows candidates who finish third to steal elections."

## THE 'AV' REFERENDUM: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**What is it?** On 5 May, there will be a nationwide referendum to decide whether we should scrap our current voting system and replace it with one called the 'Alternative Vote' (AV).

**Why are we having it?** The referendum was something the Liberal Democrats wanted as part of the agreement to form a Coalition with the Conservatives.

**The Conservatives will campaign for a 'No' vote and the Liberal Democrats will campaign for 'Yes' vote.**

### 5 GOOD REASONS TO VOTE 'NO' TO AV

- 1 AV is unfair.** With First Past the Post, everybody gets one vote. But under AV, supporters of extreme parties like the BNP would get their vote counted many times, while people who vote for one of the mainstream candidates would only get their vote counted once.
- 2 AV doesn't work.** Rather than the candidate who receives the most votes winning the election, the person who finishes third could be declared the winner.
- 3 AV is expensive.** Calculating the results is a long, complicated process, which would cost the taxpayer millions. It can take days to figure out exactly who has won.
- 4 AV is discredited.** Whereas First Past the Post is the most widely used system in the world, only 3 countries actually use AV – Fiji, Australia and Papua New Guinea. In Fiji they want to get rid of it, and in Australia six out of ten people want to ditch it too.
- 5 No-one actually wants AV.** Even the 'Yes' campaigners don't actually want AV – they see it as a convenient stepping stone to even more reforms. Many of the Yes campaigners have previously criticised AV.

## HOW DO THE TWO SYSTEMS COMPARE?

**May's referendum will offer a choice between two voting systems:**

**1. Our current system** (sometimes referred to as 'First Past the Post'). Everyone gets one vote. You put an 'X' next to the candidate you want to support. The candidate with the most votes wins.

**2. The 'Alternative Vote' system.** Instead of using an 'X', voters rank candidates in order of preference using '1, 2, 3' and so on. If one candidate has more than 50% of the first preference votes, they are

elected outright. If that doesn't happen, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and the second, third or later choices of the people who voted for them are allocated to the remaining candidates. If there are no choices for a candidate still in the race, those votes play no further part.

If still no candidate has 50%, the next lowest candidate is eliminated and their votes are redistributed.

This process continues until one candidate has over 50% of the votes which remain in the count.

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

On 5 May, there will be a referendum on changing our voting system. Which system do you think you will vote for?

- The current system     The 'Alternative Vote'

Which party do you think you will vote for at the next election?

- Conservatives     Not sure: Con or Lab  
 Labour     Not sure: but not Con  
 Lib Dem     Not sure: Con or Lib Dem  
 Other

Please send me information about ways I can help campaign with the Conservatives.

Please return to: **Address 1, Address 2, Address 3, Address 4, Address 5, Address 6.**

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

**How we use your information** Any personal information that you provide in response to this survey will be collected and stored by the Conservative Party in accordance with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. We will use the contact details you provide to send you Party communications including, for example, updates on policy and special member offers, either by post, telephone, email or SMS. We would also like to share your information with The No Campaign Ltd for the referendum on the parliamentary voting system so that they may send you information about their campaign, by post, telephone, email and SMS. If you do not wish your information to be used by the Conservative Party to contact you or being shared in this way, please tick the box:

# VOTE NO to AV

## Say no to an unfair, expensive and discredited system of voting

I/We the undersigned will be voting **NO to AV** to stop the proposed changes which would lead to an unfair, expensive and discredited system.

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE	PHONE/EMAIL	Do not contact*
			Phone	
			Email	
			Phone	
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			Phone	
			Email	
			Phone	
			Email	
			Phone	
			Email	
			Phone	
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			Email	

**How we use your information** The data you provide will be retained by the Conservative Party and used Name of Association/Name of MP (The data holders) in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and related legislation. By providing your data to us, you are consenting to the data holders making contact with you in the future by telephone, text or other means, even though you may be registered with the Telephone Preference Service. Your data will not be sold or given to anyone not connected to the Conservative Party. If you do not want the information you give to us to be used in this way, or for us to contact you, please inform us by ticking the relevant box(es) at the bottom of the form.

Printed by <insert name>, on behalf of <insert full address and postcode>. Printed by <insert name, full address and postcode>.

Please return to: **CCHQ, 30 Millbank, London, SW1P 4DP.**



**Conservatives**

## Survey postcard

# 5 GOOD REASONS TO VOTE NO TO AV

[www.conservatives.com/notoav](http://www.conservatives.com/notoav)

Promoted by <insert name>, on behalf of <insert name>, both of <insert full address and postcode>.  
Printed by <insert name, full address and postcode>.

- 1 It's unfair.** With First Past the Post (our current system), everybody gets one vote. But under AV, supporters of extreme parties like the BNP would get their vote counted many times, while other people's vote would only be counted once.
- 2 It doesn't work.** Rather than the candidate with the most votes winning, under AV the person who finishes third could be elected.
- 3 It's expensive.** Calculating the results would be a long, complicated process, which could even require special counting machines - and it would cost the taxpayer millions.
- 4 It's discredited.** Only 3 countries in the world use AV - Fiji, Australia and Papua New Guinea - and both Fiji and Australia want to get rid of it.
- 5 No-one wants it.** Even the 'Yes' campaigners don't want AV - they see it as a convenient stepping stone to even more reforms.

 **Conservatives**

## Template letter text

As you may have heard, there will be a nationwide referendum on May 5th to decide whether the UK should scrap our current voting system and replace it with a different one called the 'Alternative Vote' (AV).

This referendum was something the Liberal Democrats wanted as part of the agreement to form a Coalition with the Conservatives, and the Lib Dems will be campaigning for a 'Yes' vote. I am joining people from right across the political spectrum to campaign for a 'No' vote because I do not think the 'Alternative Vote' is the change we need.

## How the systems compare

The referendum will offer a choice between two voting systems:

- Our existing system (sometimes referred to as 'First Past the Post'). In this system, everyone gets one vote. You put an 'X' next to the candidate you want to support. The candidate with the most votes wins.
- The 'Alternative Vote' (AV) system. Instead of using an 'X', voters rank candidates in order of preference using '1, 2, 3' and so on. If one candidate has more than 50 per cent of the first preference votes, they are elected outright. If that doesn't happen, the last-placed candidate is eliminated and the ballot papers of anyone who voted for him or her are re-allocated according to the next valid preferences on each ballot paper. (This may be their second, third, fourth or later preference depending on which candidates remain in the contest. If someone has only voted for a candidate or

candidates who have already been eliminated, then that ballot paper is discounted and plays no further role in the count.) This process continues until a candidate has an absolute majority of the votes which are left in the count, and he or she is elected.

## Five reasons to vote 'No' to AV

1. **It is unfair.** With First Past the Post, everybody gets one vote. But under AV, supporters of extreme parties like the BNP would get their vote counted many times, while people who vote for one of the mainstream candidates would only get their vote counted once.
2. **It doesn't work.** Rather than the candidate who receives the most votes winning the election, the person who finishes third could be declared the winner.
3. **It is expensive.** Calculating the results is a long, complicated process, which would cost the taxpayer millions. It can take days to figure out exactly who has won.
4. **It is discredited.** Whereas First Past the Post is the most widely used system in the world, only 3 countries actually use AV – Fiji, Australia and Papua New Guinea. And in Australia six out of ten people want to get rid of it.
5. **No-one wants it.** Even the 'Yes' campaigners don't actually want AV – they see it as a convenient stepping stone to even more reforms. Many of the Yes campaigners have previously criticised AV.

Those are some of the reasons why I'll be voting 'No' in the referendum on 5 May. If you would like any further information – or if you would like to join me in helping to stop the politicians force an unfair and discredited voting system on us – please visit [conservatives.com/notoav](http://conservatives.com/notoav).

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Name Surname  
Conservative MP/Councillor for Constituency/Ward

PS. AV is an unfair, expensive and discredited voting system being pushed by politicians who want it for their own self-interested reasons. Please visit [conservatives.com/notoav](http://conservatives.com/notoav) to help us stop them.

AV is “even less proportional than First Past the Post”

ROY JENKINS (1998)

# THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

How many times will your vote be counted?



# Compliance

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Anything the Conservative Party does to participate in the referendum is subject to similar strict rules and spending limits during the campaign period as for a Parliamentary General Election. The campaign period began when the Bill received Royal Assent on 16 February and will end on 5 May 2011. All campaign expenditure incurred by the Conservative Party needs to be approved by the Party's Registered Treasurer. Each Association will be given a pre-approved limit of up to £2,500 (please note the funds for any spending towards this limit will have to be raised locally). Any expenditure above this limit MUST be pre-approved in writing. Please contact Darren Mott at CCHQ to discuss. (The designated No Campaign will also have a separate limit for its campaign expenditure.)

Invoices for any expenditure must be received within 30 days of 5 May. Please ensure that all of your suppliers are aware of this deadline as after this date you cannot pay them without a court order. You must also pay all invoices received within 60 days of 5 May. Remember that even if your Association prints its own leaflets the cost of paper etc must be included on the return. Other items given or lent to the Association for the campaign, such as campaign vehicles, second-hand equipment or free use of shop space etc are donations in kind and, if valued at over £500, must be from permissible sources, and if valued at over £200 must be included on the expenditure return we will provide in due course.

Further detailed guidance has been issued to all Associations. If you have any questions please contact Compliance on 020 7984 8005 or [compliance@conservatives.com](mailto:compliance@conservatives.com).

AV is "a miserable little compromise thrashed out by the Labour Party."

**NICK CLEGG MP, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS, (APR 2010)**

# Imprint

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It is a requirement of law that any item you publish during the referendum campaign carries the correct imprint.

If you produce items from the templates provided in the pack, you will need to put an imprint in the following form:

Promoted by [Name of Association Chairman] on behalf of the Conservative Party both at [Association Address] and printed by [Name and address of printer, or Name and address of Association if they have printed the document].

The Association Chairman is used in this instance as he or she is the person responsible for the accounting unit and will be required to ensure that the relevant financial return is made to the Party's Registered Treasurer following the referendum as mentioned in the Compliance section of the pack.

Printed items you may receive from CCHQ will already carry the correct imprint and will have been accounted for within the Party's spending limit. Similarly, printed items you may receive from the independent NO to AV campaign will already carry their imprint and will have been accounted for within the No campaign's separate spending limit.

"It means a voting system that is unfair, processes that are unclear and politics that is unaccountable. It is, put simply, the precise opposite of what we need right now. And that's why I urge the country to vote 'no' in May's referendum."

**DAVID CAMERON (FEB 2011)**

# THE AV QUIZ

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**Which of these countries use AV for their national elections?**

- a) USA      b) India      c) Canada      d) Papua New Guinea

**If the recent Oldham East & Saddleworth by-election was run using AV, Labour, Lib Dem and Conservative supporters may have had their vote counted once – but how many times could the 67 voters of the Bus-Pass Elvis Party have had their vote counted?**

- a) 5      b) 6      c) 7      d) 8

**2.4 billion people vote using First Past the Post – but what percentage of the world's population vote using AV?**

- a) Less than 0.5%      b) 1%      c) 10%

**Pam Giddy, one of the key spokeswomen for the Yes to AV campaign, once described AV as:**

- a) Total gibberish      b) A very well thought-out and rational system of voting  
b) Short for aardvark      d) A politicians' fix

**Who would have won the Labour leadership election if they'd used First Past the Post?**

- a) Ed Miliband      b) David Miliband      c) Ed Balls

**In 2002, the Electoral Reform Society, now the principal backer of the Yes to AV campaign, said it did not regard AV as suitable for what?**

- a) Grown-ups      b) The election of a representative body, e.g. a parliament  
c) The dinner table

**What did Ben Bradshaw, the Labour Director of Yes to AV, say AV didn't deliver in an article in 2009?**

- a) Making MPs more accountable  
b) Giving people more power  
c) Rebuilding public trust and confidence in politics  
d) A political system that more reflects the will of the public  
e) All of the above

For the answers, please go to  
[conservatives.com/notoav](http://conservatives.com/notoav)

# VOTE NO TO AV ON MAY 5