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## **Britons furious over politician's expenses**

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0904/090401-politicians.html>

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## THE ARTICLE

British people are expressing their outrage over how much they have to pay for their politicians. Their anger increased this week after it came to light that a politician's husband claimed expenses for two adult movies. The husband of Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said he made a mistake. He apologized for his error on national television. A day later, more details came out about Ms Smith's expenses to make the British people even angrier. Media reports state she claimed over \$150,000 in expenses for her second home. This includes several washing machines, antique furniture, two televisions and even a kitchen sink for her home. This all comes from taxpayers' money. Many Britons are suffering financially because of the global financial crisis.

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown acted quickly to try and control any political damage. He asked for a committee to be set up to look into politicians' expenses. A top-ranking politician in Britain earns just over \$90,000 a year. However, it is possible for them to claim an extra \$200,000 a year in expenses. This can include paying a husband or wife around \$65,000 to be a personal assistant. The chairman of the committee Sir Christopher Kelly said his changes would take effect from April 2010. He told reporters: "It is now obvious that this piece of work needs to start as soon as possible." He added: "The issues involved are complex...This is not something which can be done with a quick fix." It is unclear whether his changes will make Britons happier with their politicians.

# WARM-UPS

**1. POLITICIANS:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about politicians. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*British people / anger / expenses / making mistakes / antique furniture / crisis / acting quickly / political damage / personal assistants / complex issues / quick fixes*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. YOUR EXPENSES:** What are your weekly expenses? Complete the table. Talk about what you wrote with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you found out.

Expense Type	Amount	Too high / Too low?	Necessary / Unnecessary?
Food			
Entertainment			
Communications			
Travel			
Clothes			
Hobby			

**4. UNNECESSARY:** Students A **strongly** believe politicians should be able to claim \$200,000 a year in expenses; Students B **strongly** believe most politicians' expenses are unnecessary. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. FURIOUS:** Who makes you angry? Rate these people from 10 (makes me super-boiling mad) to 1 (never, ever makes me angry). Share your ratings with your partner(s).

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| _____ My English teacher       | _____ My neighbour        |
| _____ My country's leader      | _____ My brother / sister |
| _____ My mother / father       | _____ My boss             |
| _____ My favourite sports team | _____ Myself              |

**6. ANGER:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'anger'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. British people aren't happy at how much politicians claim in expenses. T / F
- b. A politician's husband bought a light, and so angered the British public. T / F
- c. The politician's husband said he was sorry on British television. T / F
- d. British taxpayers' paid for the politician's washing machines and sink. T / F
- e. Gordon Brown was not slow to react to this news. T / F
- f. UK politicians cannot ask family members to assist them in their job. T / F
- g. A committee will start looking into politicians' expenses from 2010. T / F
- h. The committee's recommendations will make the British public happy. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. expressing  | a. difficult     |
| 2. outrage     | b. hurting       |
| 3. claimed     | c. swiftly       |
| 4. several     | d. numerous      |
| 5. suffering   | e. start         |
| 6. quickly     | f. if            |
| 7. set up      | g. communicating |
| 8. take effect | h. asked for     |
| 9. complex     | i. anger         |
| 10. whether    | j. created       |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. people are expressing                     | a. to light                     |
| 2. after it came                             | b. just over \$90,000 a year    |
| 3. He apologized for his                     | c. with a quick fix             |
| 4. This all comes from                       | d. their outrage                |
| 5. Many Britons are suffering                | e. damage                       |
| 6. control any political                     | f. taxpayers' money             |
| 7. He asked for a committee to be            | g. from April 2010              |
| 8. A top-ranking politician in Britain earns | h. financially                  |
| 9. his changes would take effect             | i. set up                       |
| 10. This is not something which can be done  | j. error on national television |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

British people are expressing their \_\_\_\_\_ over how much they have to pay for their politicians. Their anger increased this week after it came to \_\_\_\_\_ that a politician's husband claimed expenses for two adult movies. The husband of Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said he \_\_\_\_\_ a mistake. He apologized for his error on national television. A day later, more \_\_\_\_\_ came out about Ms Smith's expenses to make the British people even angrier. Media reports state she \_\_\_\_\_ over \$150,000 in expenses for her second home. This includes \_\_\_\_\_ washing machines, antique furniture, two televisions and even a kitchen sink for her home. This all \_\_\_\_\_ from taxpayers' money. Many Britons are \_\_\_\_\_ financially because of the global financial crisis.

*details*  
*light*  
*several*  
*suffering*  
*outrage*  
*claimed*  
*made*  
*comes*

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown \_\_\_\_\_ quickly to try and control any political damage. He asked for a committee to be \_\_\_\_\_ up to look into politicians' expenses. A top-ranking politician in Britain \_\_\_\_\_ just over \$90,000 a year. However, it is possible for them to claim an extra \$200,000 a year in expenses. This can include paying a husband or wife \_\_\_\_\_ \$65,000 to be a personal assistant. The chairman of the committee Sir Christopher Kelly said his changes would take \_\_\_\_\_ from April 2010. He told reporters: "It is now \_\_\_\_\_ that this piece of work needs to start as soon as possible." He added: "The issues involved are \_\_\_\_\_ ...This is not something which can be done with a \_\_\_\_\_ fix." It is unclear whether his changes will make Britons happier with their politicians.

*obvious*  
*quick*  
*set*  
*around*  
*acted*  
*complex*  
*earns*  
*effect*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

British people are expressing their outrage \_\_\_\_\_ they have to pay for their politicians. Their anger increased this week after it \_\_\_\_\_ that a politician's husband claimed expenses for two adult movies. The husband of Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said he made a mistake. He apologized \_\_\_\_\_ national television. A day later, more details \_\_\_\_\_ Ms Smith's expenses to make the British people even angrier. Media reports state she claimed over \$150,000 \_\_\_\_\_ second home. This includes several washing machines, antique furniture, two televisions and even a kitchen sink for her home. This \_\_\_\_\_ taxpayers' money. Many Britons are suffering financially because of the global financial crisis.

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown acted quickly \_\_\_\_\_ any political damage. He asked for a committee \_\_\_\_\_ look into politicians' expenses. A top-ranking politician in Britain earns just over \$90,000 a year. However, it is possible for them \_\_\_\_\_ \$200,000 a year in expenses. This can include paying a husband or wife around \$65,000 to be a personal assistant. The chairman of the committee Sir Christopher Kelly said his changes \_\_\_\_\_ from April 2010. He told reporters: "It is now obvious that this piece of work needs to start as soon as possible." He added: "The issues \_\_\_\_\_ ...This is not something which \_\_\_\_\_ a quick fix." It is unclear whether his changes will make Britons happier with their politicians.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'financial' and 'crisis'.

<b>financial</b>	<b>crisis</b>
------------------	---------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• expressing</li><li>• light</li><li>• apologized</li><li>• angrier</li><li>• several</li><li>• suffering</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• quickly</li><li>• set up</li><li>• earns</li><li>• wife</li><li>• obvious</li><li>• unclear</li></ul>
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# STUDENT POLITICIANS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about politicians in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

# POLITICIANS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'politician'?
- c) Do you like the politicians you know?
- d) A well-known expression says you know when a politician is lying because his/her lips move. What does this mean? Do you agree?
- e) Do you think politicians are overpaid?
- f) Do you think politicians should face heavy penalties if they betray the public's trust?
- g) Would you be a good politician?
- h) Should taxpayers have to pay for a politician's furniture?
- i) Are you suffering in the global financial crisis?
- j) Would you like a say in how your government spends your taxes?

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# POLITICIANS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do you think of the politician's husband making the British taxpayer pay for his adult videos?
- c) Do you think Jacqui Smith should resign?
- d) What stupid things do politicians in your country do?
- e) When was the last time you apologized about a mistake you made?
- f) Would this kind of story cause political damage in your country?
- g) Do politicians work hard enough?
- h) What kind of person makes a good politician?
- i) Should a politician go to prison for falsely claiming expenses?
- j) What questions would you ask Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith?

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# LANGUAGE

British people are expressing their (1) \_\_\_\_\_ over how much they have to pay for their politicians. Their anger increased this week after it came to (2) \_\_\_\_\_ that a politician's husband claimed expenses for two adult movies. The husband of Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said he (3) \_\_\_\_\_ a mistake. He apologized for his error on national television. A day later, more details came out about Ms Smith's expenses to (4) \_\_\_\_\_ the British people even angrier. Media reports state she claimed over \$150,000 in expenses for her second home. This includes (5) \_\_\_\_\_ washing machines, antique furniture, two televisions and even a kitchen sink for her home. This all comes from (6) \_\_\_\_\_ money. Many Britons are suffering financially because of the global financial crisis.

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown acted quickly to try and control any political (7) \_\_\_\_\_. He asked for a committee to be set up to look into politicians' expenses. A top-ranking politician in Britain (8) \_\_\_\_\_ just over \$90,000 a year. However, it is possible for them to claim an extra \$200,000 a year in expenses. This can include (9) \_\_\_\_\_ a husband or wife around \$65,000 to be a personal assistant. The chairman of the committee Sir Christopher Kelly said his changes would (10) \_\_\_\_\_ effect from April 2010. He told reporters: "It is now obvious that this piece of work needs to start as soon as possible." He added: "The issues involved are complex...This is not something which can be done with a (11) \_\_\_\_\_ fix." It is unclear whether his changes will make Britons happier (12) \_\_\_\_\_ their politicians.

## Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- |     |                |                |                |                  |
|-----|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1.  | (a) outrage    | (b) outrageous | (c) outraged   | (d) outrageously |
| 2.  | (a) dark       | (b) dim        | (c) light      | (d) bright       |
| 3.  | (a) did        | (b) made       | (c) make       | (d) do           |
| 4.  | (a) making     | (b) makes      | (c) made       | (d) make         |
| 5.  | (a) few        | (b) pair       | (c) several    | (d) number       |
| 6.  | (a) taxpayers' | (b) taxpayers  | (c) tax payers | (d) taxpayer's   |
| 7.  | (a) damages    | (b) damaging   | (c) damaged    | (d) damage       |
| 8.  | (a) earnings   | (b) earns      | (c) earners    | (d) earn         |
| 9.  | (a) paid       | (b) payment    | (c) paying     | (d) pays         |
| 10. | (a) take       | (b) give       | (c) do         | (d) see          |
| 11. | (a) quickly    | (b) quick      | (c) quicken    | (d) quickens     |
| 12. | (a) to         | (b) so         | (c) up         | (d) with         |



# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about the work of politicians. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. POLITICIAN:** Make a job recruitment poster for a politician's position. Include details of what experience and qualifications are needed. What are the politician's duties? Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. TAXPAYER:** Write a magazine article about Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith's expenses claim for her husband's adult videos. Include imaginary interviews with Jacqui Smith and someone who has just lost his/her job.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith. Ask her three questions about her husband's actions. Give her three ideas on what she should do to help the British people. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. F      c. T      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. F      h. F

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.      expressing  | a.      communicating |
| 2.      outrage     | b.      anger         |
| 3.      claimed     | c.      asked for     |
| 4.      several     | d.      numerous      |
| 5.      suffering   | e.      hurting       |
| 6.      quickly     | f.      swiftly       |
| 7.      set up      | g.      created       |
| 8.      take effect | h.      start         |
| 9.      complex     | i.      difficult     |
| 10.     whether     | j.      if            |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1.      people are expressing                     | a.      their outrage                |
| 2.      after it came                             | b.      to light                     |
| 3.      He apologized for his                     | c.      error on national television |
| 4.      This all comes from                       | d.      taxpayers' money             |
| 5.      Many Britons are suffering                | e.      financially                  |
| 6.      control any political                     | f.      damage                       |
| 7.      He asked for a committee to be            | g.      set up                       |
| 8.      A top-ranking politician in Britain earns | h.      just over \$90,000 a year    |
| 9.      his changes would take effect             | i.      from April 2010              |
| 10.     This is not something which can be done   | j.      with a quick fix             |

## GAP FILL:

### Britons furious over politician's expenses

British people are expressing their **outrage** over how much they have to pay for their politicians. Their anger increased this week after it came to **light** that a politician's husband claimed expenses for two adult movies. The husband of Britain's Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said he **made** a mistake. He apologized for his error on national television. A day later, more **details** came out about Ms Smith's expenses to make the British people even angrier. Media reports state she **claimed** over \$150,000 in expenses for her second home. This includes **several** washing machines, antique furniture, two televisions and even a kitchen sink for her home. This all **comes** from taxpayers' money. Many Britons are **suffering** financially because of the global financial crisis.

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown **acted** quickly to try and control any political damage. He asked for a committee to be **set** up to look into politicians' expenses. A top-ranking politician in Britain **earns** just over \$90,000 a year. However, it is possible for them to claim an extra \$200,000 a year in expenses. This can include paying a husband or wife **around** \$65,000 to be a personal assistant. The chairman of the committee Sir Christopher Kelly said his changes would take **effect** from April 2010. He told reporters: "It is now **obvious** that this piece of work needs to start as soon as possible." He added: "The issues involved are **complex**...This is not something which can be done with a **quick** fix." It is unclear whether his changes will make Britons happier with their politicians.

## LANGUAGE WORK

1 - a    2 - c    3 - b    4 - d    5 - c    6 - a    7 - d    8 - b    9 - c    10 - a    11 - b    12 - d