

CHRONOLOGY OF 2016 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

- 3 Feb Taoiseach visits Áras an Uachtaráin and advises president to dissolve the 31st Dáil. The election date is set for Friday 26 February, making the formal campaign duration 23 days, one of the shortest on record.
- 5 Feb The early days are dominated by discussion of the ‘fiscal space’ in the years ahead, a neologism coined to refer to the amount of discretionary spending that will be available to the next government on various assumptions about future economic growth. Parties accuse each other of making unrealistic assumptions and hence exaggerating the size of the spending pot that will be available, while jargon-averse commentators plead that the term ‘fiscal space’ be banned from the airwaves entirely for the duration of the campaign.
- 5 Feb SF reiterates its call for the abolition of the non-jury Special Criminal Court, an appeal backed by civil liberties groups. On the same day, a high-profile gangland murder leads other parties to insist that a non-jury court is needed in certain cases because of the risk of jury intimidation. These parties also take the opportunity to remind the public of the case of Thomas ‘Slab’ Murphy of south Armagh, allegedly a former leading figure in the IRA, who was recently convicted of tax offences in the Special Criminal Court, and whom several leading figures in SF have described as ‘a good republican’.
- 7 Feb Michael Noonan, the Minister for Finance, announces that FG policy is to abolish the Universal Social Charge (USC),