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## Alternative oath 'necessary'

It was necessary to have an alternative oath which could be taken by any member of the Legislative Council who did not wish to take the oath of allegiance, because Hongkong was moving towards more representative government, the Secretary for Administrative Services and Information, Mr Peter Tsao, said.

Moving the second reading of the Oaths and Declarations (Amendment) Bill, Mr Tsao said: "The new alternative oath will be known as the Legislative Council Oath, the form of which is set out in Clause 5 of the Bill as a new Part IV a in the second schedule to the principal ordinance.

"Clause 2 of the Bill adds the new oath to the list of oaths dealt with in the ordinance.

"Clause 3 amends the ordinance so a member of the Legislative Council will have a choice to take either the oath of allegiance or the Legislative Council Oath.

"Clause 4 has the effect of relieving a member of the Legislative Council from the requirement to take either the oath of allegiance or the Legislative Council Oath if he has taken either oath on a previous appointment to the council."

Subject to the Bill being passed, Mr Tsao said, consequential changes to the standing orders of the council would be made before the end of this session.

Mr Tsao said that on appointment a member of the Legislative Council, whether Official or Unofficial, takes an oath of allegiance under which he swears that he "will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen

Elizabeth the Second, her heirs and successors, according to law."

In the context of moving towards more representative government, he said, retention of the mandatory requirement to take this oath in its present form might be undesirable.

However, Mr Tsao said, it was proposed that a member of the Executive Council should continue to be required to take the oath of allegiance on a first appointment to the Executive Council, if he had not taken it before, even though he might have taken the Legislative Council oath.

"No change is proposed to that part of the principal ordinance which provides that an affirmation is permitted in lieu of an oath," he said.

Debate on the Bill was adjourned.