

## Biography

### **Senator Fidelma Healy Eames, Ph.D., M.Sc., B.Ed.**

Dr Fidelma Healy Eames is an Irish politician, educator, mother and member of [Seanad Éireann](#).

The eldest of five children, she grew up on the family dairy farm in Moylough, Co. Galway with her three sisters and one brother. Here she learned a strong work ethic and sense of identity.

She is married to Michael Eames, also a farmer, and they have two children Niall and Ruth. Her family home is in Maree, Oranmore, a beautiful coastal area, where she has lived for over twenty years and reared her children.

Before entering politics, Fidelma had a professional background spanning twenty years in education. She was a lecturer in Teacher Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick (specialist area, **Literacy Education**) following her early years as a primary school teacher in Newcastle, Athenry and Tuam and as a high school teacher in New York where she completed a Master of Science degree in Education.

In 1999 she graduated with a Ph.D. in Education from NUIG, Galway. Her specialist research area was language learning and creative writing with a focus on the 'Teaching of Writing in Irish Primary Schools'.

Prior to entering Seanad Eireann, Fidelma was self-employed for six years and Director of her own business, FHE Education & Training Providers. In this capacity she lead a team providing learning seminars and study-based courses to students, teachers and parents across Ireland. In 2006 she published 'Switching on for Learning' to support her work in this area.

From the mid '90s to the early 2000s she worked in Health Promotion and Public Health, focusing on prevention and better health outcomes in the community. This experience convinced her of the need for Local Primary Health Care Centres which she still pursues today.

## Politics

In the late '90s Fidelma was invited to join the Maree branch of Fine Gael. Having grown up in a Fine Gael household and having loved history in school, she had

admired the contribution of key figures like Michael Collins, Garrett Fitzgerald and Mary Robinson.

She was first elected a Senator in 2007. Prior to that, she was elected to [Galway County Council](#), for the [Oranmore](#) electoral area, and served there from 2004-2007. Her various appointments as a Galway County Councillor (2004-2007) included: Chairperson of [County Galway](#) Vocational Education Committee (VEC) member of [Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology](#) (GMIT) Governing Body, member of [HSE](#) West Regional Forum, director of [Galway Airport](#), member of [Galway City and County Enterprise Board](#), and a member of the Western Rail Committee.

During her term as Chair of County Galway VEC she oversaw the setting up of the new Gael Colaiste 'Colaiste an Acheirdh' in Athenry and the move of Co Galway VEC HQ from city to county.

When elected to the Senate in 2007, Fidelma was appointed Fine Gael Seanad spokesperson on Education and Science. In 2011, she was appointed as the Seanad Spokesperson on Social Protection and member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills. She was elected three times to represent the Irish people - in local elections in 2004 and to the Seanad in 2007 and 2011.

In July 2013 Fidelma parted ways with Fine Gael on the abortion issue, following the breaking of a key pledge by the party. She had sought a 'free vote' on the abortion legislation given that it was a matter of conscience but it wasn't granted by the Fine Gael leadership. Since then Fidelma has been an Independent senator and is running for the first time as an Independent candidate in the General Election of 2016. She lost out narrowly (45 votes) on a Dail seat in 2011.

Throughout her time in the Seanad, Fidelma has championed the need for education reform eg., in the areas of Early School Leaving; Improved Career Guidance; Special Educational Needs; New school builds and more school places in her constituency.

She has co-sponsored important legislation on children's rights in the area of adoption.

In 2014 she published a Bill on Budget Reform to make Government Departments more accountable for improved outcomes and better use of public money. She believes, if enacted, that this piece of legislation would benefit the public greatly.

Fidelma was appointed Women In Parliament's (WIP) Education Champion for Ireland in 2015. This followed her voluntary work in the Ministry for Education in Rwanda (2012) and her Initiation and chairing of the successful Education Conference: Reforming Learning, Driving Success (2014) which focused on reform of Senior Cycle & the transition to and the quality of the Third-level Education Experience in Ireland.

At the core of Fidelma's work is a strong drive for fairness, a sense of justice and a desire for improvements for the citizen, community and society. She has been a tireless advocate for local issues, for small businesses, farmers and schools.

During the recession in 2009 she co-founded Job Creation Initiative Oranmore (JCIO). In 2012, she Chaired the [China-Ireland Relations Inaugural Conference](#) from which the successful Chinese language and culture initiative in 20 Galway schools continues.

She is an advocate for young people and strong local communities. Her founding of the 'Oranmore Maree Volunteer Awards' programme is an example of how she recognises local heroes.

She conducted a feasibility study on a model for a 'Galway Young Creators' Centre' aimed at nurturing young peoples' talents, creativity and mental health. If elected as a TD she would like to see this implemented.

Passionate about culture and creativity, in 2013 she was delighted to be asked to be Chairperson of the Yeats ThoorBallylee Society. Together with a dedicated committee she oversaw the re-opening of Thoor Ballylee on time for Yeats' 150th birthday (June 2015). This feeds into Galway's drive for the European Capital of Culture 2020.

Fidelma has published a raft of documents, reports, and newspaper articles during her career, some of which are accessible on her website at [www.fidelmahealyeames.ie](http://www.fidelmahealyeames.ie)