

2004 VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

Purpose

This note provides a response to the comments put forth by Members at the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs (“CA Panel”) on 15 March 2004.

Appeal to Geographical Constituency (“GC”) electors

2. At the last meeting, Members suggested that we should encourage all eligible persons to register as GC electors. Specifically, it was suggested that individual appeal letters should be sent to all eligible GC electors and household visits be conducted.

3. The 2004 Voter Registration Campaign will take place from 3 April to 16 May. We will adopt a multi-pronged and results-oriented approach in encouraging eligible persons to register as GC electors. We aim at reaching all eligible electors as far as possible. To this end, we will be implementing a number of measures, including sending individual appeal letters to two million households in Hong Kong, encouraging eligible persons to register as GC electors and reminding registered electors who have changed their addresses to update their records with the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”). Other measures have been outlined in a paper we forwarded to the last Panel meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)1686/03-04(04)).

Appeal to Functional Constituency (“FC”) electors

4. At the last CA Panel meeting, a Member suggested that we consider preparing user-friendly guidelines on qualifications for registration as FC electors. To facilitate members of the public, we will upload detailed Guidance Notes on FCs onto the voter registration website. In case a member of the public has any question on his eligibility to register as a FC elector, he could contact the REO through the Enquiry Hotline (Tel No: 2891 1001) to obtain the necessary

information.

5. At the meeting, a Member asked if all eligible persons who have not registered as FC electors will receive individual appeal letters. Members may wish to note that the REO will send appeal letters to eligible FC electors who have not yet registered. The lists of eligible electors of the REO are compiled based on the information provided by relevant organizations.

6. It was suggested at the meeting that the Administration should promote awareness of the public that a registered GC and FC elector with inaccurate residential address record might be disqualified from being an elector for both GC and FC. We will incorporate this reminder in the individual appeal letters to be sent to all households. We will also put this reminder onto the voter registration website.

Working Target

7. Our working target is to register 180,000 new electors and to update the records of 300,000 registered electors during the 2004 calendar year. This target is arrived at having regard to the actual figures achieved in the 2003 calendar year. We will endeavour to register as many electors, and to update the records of as many electors, as possible.

Deadline for Application for Voter Registration

8. In response to a Member's request, we have reviewed whether the gap between the deadline for application for voter registration and the polling day could be further reduced.

9. For the 2004 Legislative Council ("LegCo") election, the deadline for voter registration is 16 May. The Final Register must be compiled and published before the nomination period commences, i.e. 22 July. There are a total of nine weeks for the REO to process applications for voter registration. A detailed timetable is set out below –

| Timeframe for processing applications for voter registration for the 2004 LegCo election | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|-------------|
| Item | Task | Time required | Date |
| 1 | Deadline for application for voter registration | | 16 May |
| 2 | Compilation and publication of Provisional Register and Omissions List | 4 weeks | 15 June |
| 3 | Compilation and publication of Final Register | 5 weeks | 21 July |
| 4 | Commencement of nomination period | | 22 July |
| - | Total number of weeks required for processing the applications | 9 weeks | - |

10. According to the experience of previous election years, the REO needs to process large amount of applications during the Voter Registration Campaign. During the 2003 campaign, the REO received a total of 312,000 applications, out of which more than 70,000 applications were received on the last day before the deadline for application. The REO needs at least four weeks to check and input the particulars of the applicants for compiling and publishing the Provisional Register and the Omissions List.

11. Following the publication of the Provisional Register and the Omissions List, claims and objections may be raised by members of the public. In 2003, there were 308 cases of claims and objections. The Revising Officer will need at least four weeks to conduct relevant hearings, while the REO will need one week to incorporate the rulings and publish the Final Register before commencement of the nomination period.

12. After publication of the Final Register, a period of two to three weeks should be allowed for nomination.¹ Sufficient time should also be allowed for canvassing activities to take place.

13. In order to allow time for the REO to process voter registration applications, for the public to lodge claims or objections and for the Revising Officer to consider such cases, as well as to allow sufficient time for nomination and canvassing activities, we consider that it is practically difficult to further reduce the gap between the deadline for voter registration and the polling day.

Other matters

14. The Administration was requested at the last meeting to provide the ratio of registered electors living in public housing and those living in private housing. The REO does not maintain such a breakdown as an applicant is not required to indicate whether he is living in public or private housing when making an application for voter registration.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau
26 March 2004

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¹ Section 7(2) of the Electoral Affairs Commission (Electoral Procedure) (Legislation Council) Regulation (Cap.541D).