

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2007 Voter Registration Campaign

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the main features of the 2007 Voter Registration Campaign.

Background

2. The 2007 District Council (DC) election will be held in November 2007. In line with past practice during DC election years, we will organize a voter registration campaign. An inter-departmental working group, comprising representatives from the Constitutional Affairs Bureau (CAB), Home Affairs Department (HAD), Registration and Electoral Office (REO), Information Services Department (ISD) and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), has been formed to work out the details of the campaign.

Timetable for voter registration and publication of registers

3. Under current legislation, Hong Kong permanent residents holding an identity document who have reached 18 years of age, and ordinarily reside in Hong Kong, are eligible to be registered as electors. Eligible persons should apply to the REO for registration. Registration can be made any time in a year, but only those who have made their application by the annual deadline can be included in the registers of electors published in that year and vote in elections conducted thereafter. Similar to other DC election years, the deadline for registration for 2007 is 16 July.

4. Once registered, there is no need for the electors to register again. However, if there is any change in their registration particulars (their residential address in particular), they will have to report to the REO by the annual deadline. If an elector has changed his residential address but has not reported such change to the REO, his eligibility to vote may be affected. Similar to other DC election years, the deadline for registered electors to update their particulars for 2007 is 29 August.

5. In accordance with the law, for a DC election year, the provisional and final registers will be published on or before 15 August and 25 September respectively.

Main Features of the 2007 Voter Registration Campaign

6. The main features of the campaign are highlighted in paragraphs 7 to 18 below.

(a) Objectives

7. Our overall objectives are to encourage eligible persons to register as electors, and to remind registered electors who have changed their registration particulars to update their records with the REO. The overall emphasis is to promote general awareness and to call upon eligible electors of all relevant age groups to register.

8. According to the last final register published in August 2006, there were about 3.19 million registered electors for geographical constituencies, representing about 68% of the estimated total number of eligible electors. However, the registration rate for the 18 and 20 age group is only 21%, and that for the 21 to 25 age group is 52%. Therefore, as part of the overall campaign, we will encourage more young people between 18 and 25 to register as electors.

(b) Timing

9. To tie in with this year's timetable for voter registration and publication of the voter registers (as set out in paragraphs 3 to 5 above), the voter registration campaign for 2007 will last for six weeks, running from **early June to 16 July 2007**.

(c) Strategy

10. We will adopt a multi-pronged approach under which we will organise a variety of activities aimed at securing as many valid voter registration applications and notifications of change in particulars as possible. These activities will be supported by a range of publicity materials.

(d) Activities

11. A kick-off ceremony will be held in early June 2007. Throughout the campaign period, we will set up roving registration counters at popular locations (for example, major MTR stations and shopping malls) to help people make applications for voter registration or update registration particulars.

12. To encourage more young people to register, we will set up registration counters at all Registration of Persons Offices to register 18-year olds who turn up at these offices to apply for or to collect their adult identity cards. Voter registration assistants will visit at the higher education institutions to facilitate eligible students to register.

13. To target at those registered electors who have changed addresses, we will conduct household visits to new residential developments with intake after the last major voter registration exercise in 2004. The opportunity will also be taken to appeal to those who have not yet registered to submit applications for registration.

14. Furthermore, we will write to all households which have moved into new private developments to remind them to report changes in address and, if they are not already registered electors, to register early.

15. As an on-going measure, we will continue to send notifications on change of address¹ to households which have moved into new public housing estates, identified through cross-matching of Housing Department's records with REO's records. The Immigration Department will also continue the practice of providing the REO with information on change of address it receives, if the person concerned has given consent for such data transfer.

(e) Publicity materials

16. The above activities will be supported by a range of publicity materials to arouse the awareness of the community. To create greater impact, we will appoint celebrities as Voter Registration ambassadors who will be featured suitably in these publicity materials. The publicity materials will include TV and radio announcements of public interest (APIs), placement of advertisements in newspapers, at major MTR stations and on bus bodies, and display of posters and banners. A dedicated website will also be set up, with hyperlinks on Government websites and websites which young people can browse through frequently.

17. A summary table of the activities and publicity materials is at **Annex**.

¹ REO will send notification letters to registered electors in these households, and will update the address of these registered electors unless they indicate objection.

Financial Implications

18. A total amount of \$14 million has been earmarked for the 2007 Voter Registration Campaign, including publicity and processing of registration forms received, and the compilation and publication of the provisional and final registers. Sufficient provision for this purpose has been included under REO's Head of Expenditure for 2007-08.

Consultation with the Electoral Affairs Commission

19. The Electoral Affairs Commission has endorsed the proposals set out in this paper.

Advice Sought

20. Members are invited to note the content of this paper for information.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau
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<u>Responsible Bureaux/ Departments</u>	<u>Activities</u>
Constitutional Affairs Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Overall coordination of the voter registration campaign
Home Affairs Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Roving registration counters in areas with high pedestrian flow● Display of publicity items in districts● Household visits to residential developments with new intake after the voter registration exercise in 2004
Registration and Electoral Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Voter registration counters at Registration of Persons (ROP) Offices and higher education institutions● Send forms to all households in new private residential developments through the Circular Service of Hong Kong Post● Distributing forms to district offices, banks, schools and retail / service outlets of public utilities● Press release● Hotline service to handle public enquiries related to voter registration● Dedicated voter registration website
Information Services Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● APIs on television and radio● Display of posters and giant wall banners, advertisements in newspapers, at MTR stations and on bus bodies, and hyperlinks to the dedicated voter registration website.
Radio Television Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Kick-off ceremony