

Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

2008 Voter Registration Campaign

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the main features of the 2008 Voter Registration Campaign.

Background

2. The 2008 Legislative Council (“LegCo”) election will be held in September 2008. In line with past practice during LegCo election years, we will organise a voter registration campaign. An inter-departmental working group, comprising representatives from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, Home Affairs Department, Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), Information Services Department and Radio Television Hong Kong, 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. The deadline for registration for 2008 is 16 May.

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. The deadline for registered electors to update their particulars for 2008 is 30 June.

5. In accordance with the law, for 2008, the provisional and final registers will be published on or before 16 June and 25 July respectively.

Main Features of the 2008 Voter Registration Campaign

6. The main features of the campaign are highlighted in paragraphs 7 to 17 below.

(a) Objectives

7. Our overall objectives are to encourage eligible persons (in both geographical constituency (“GC”) and functional constituency (“FC”)) 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 to register.

8. According to the last final register published in September 2007, there were about 3.3 million registered electors for GCs, representing about 71% of the estimated total number of eligible electors. However, the registration rate for the 18 and 20 age group is only 29%, and that for the 21 to 25 age group is 49%. Therefore, as part of the overall campaign, we will encourage more young people between 18 and 25 to register as electors.

9. As for FCs, according to the last final register published in September 2007, there were about 210 000 registered electors, representing 69% of the estimated total number of eligible electors.

(b) Timing

10. 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 2008 will last for six weeks, running from **early April to 16 May 2008**.

(c) Strategy

11. 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 measures.

(d) Activities

12. A launching ceremony will be held in early April 2008. 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.

13. To encourage more young people to register:

- (a) we will set up registration counters at all Registration of Persons Offices to help young people turning 18 to register when they turn up at these offices to apply for or to collect their adult identity cards;
- (b) we will send VR forms to secondary schools and higher education institutions, and seek their assistance to collect forms received from their students eligible for registration; and
- (c) voter registration assistants (“VRAs”) will visit higher education institutions to facilitate eligible students to register. For senior class students of secondary schools, we have continued the school visit programme in the 2007/08 school year.

14. To target at those registered electors who have changed addresses, VRAs will conduct visits (or household visits, if permitted) to new residential developments with intake in recent years. In addition,

- (a) 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;
- (b) as an on-going measure, we will send notifications on change of address¹ to households which have moved into new public housing estates, identified through cross-matching of records of Housing Department and Housing Society with REO’s records; and

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

- (c) the Immigration Department will 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.

15. Apart from publicity activities, REO will send appeal letters/notification letters to encourage/facilitate eligible electors in FCs to register. REO will also appeal to umbrella organisations to encourage their members who are eligible electors in FCs to register.

(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, tram and taxi 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 may browse through frequently.

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

Financial Implications

18. A total amount of \$33m has been earmarked for the 2008 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 2008 – 09.

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 and Mainland Affairs Bureau
March 2008

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2008 Voter Registration Campaign

Responsible Bureaux/ Departments

Key Activities

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau	● Overall coordination of the voter registration campaign
Home Affairs Department	● Roving registration counters in areas with high pedestrian flow ● Display of publicity items (e.g. banners, buntings and posters) in districts ● Visits (or household visits, if permitted) to residential developments with new intake in recent years
Registration and Electoral Office	● Voter registration counters at Registration of Persons Offices and higher education institutions ● Send forms to all households in new private residential developments through the Circular Service of Hong Kong Post ● Send appeal letters to eligible electors in functional constituencies and umbrella organisations ● Placement of advertisements in newspapers ● Press release ● Hotline service to handle public enquiries related to voter registration ● Dedicated voter registration website and hyperlinks to the website
Information Services Department	● APIs on television and radio ● Display of posters and advertisements at MTR stations and on bus, tram and taxi bodies
Radio Television Hong Kong	● Launching ceremony