

**Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs
2012 Voter Registration Campaign**

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the main features of the 2012 Voter Registration (“VR”) Campaign.

Background

2. The 2012 Legislative Council (“LegCo”) Election will be held in September 2012. In line with past practice during election years, we will organise a VR campaign. An inter-departmental working group (“the Working Group”), comprising representatives from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (“CMAB”), Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), Home Affairs Department, Information Services Department, Independent Commission Against Corruption and Radio Television Hong Kong, has been formed to work out the details of the campaign.

3. As a separate exercise, the REO issued letters to all registered electors in February 2012, explaining the registration arrangements regarding the new District Council (second) functional constituency (“FC”) for the 2012 LegCo Election. The letters serve two purposes :

- (a) in respect of the VR arrangement of District Council (second) FC, the letters –
 - (i) inform those geographical constituency (“GC”) electors who are not registered in any FC that they will be automatically registered in the new District Council (second) FC, unless they elect not to be so registered;
 - (ii) inform all the FC electors (except those for the Heung Yee Kuk FC, Agriculture and Fisheries FC, Insurance FC, Transport FC and District Council (first) FC¹) that they may choose to be registered in the District Council (second) FC instead of the FC in which they are currently registered;

¹ Under section 25(3) of the LegCo Ordinance (Cap. 542), a person who is eligible to be registered in the Heung Yee Kuk FC, Agriculture and Fisheries FC, Insurance FC or Transport FC has no choice but to be registered in that FC although he may also be eligible for other FC(s). Furthermore, in any event if a person is eligible to be registered in the District Council (first) FC, he may only be registered in the DC (first) FC and not in any other FC.

- (b) in respect of the accuracy of registered addresses in the voter registers, the letters –
 - (i) remind electors that they should update their residential addresses if there are any changes; and
 - (ii) with the aid of a special design of the envelope, facilitate the return of wrongly delivered mails for REO's follow-up action. If the occupant receives a letter that is not addressed to him or his family members, or that there is no such addressee in his residence, the occupant may put a "tick" in the appropriate box on the envelope and return it to the REO.

4. Some publicity items including TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interest ("APIs"), posters and newspaper advertisements were also launched in mid-February 2012 to complement the messages in paragraph 3 above.

5. Furthermore, in the light of the recent public concern on the accuracy of the residential addresses recorded in the register of electors, the CMAB conducted a public consultation from 16 January to 2 March 2012 on a number of further enhancement measures related to VR. The Administration is considering the views received. In the light of the views received, we will formulate appropriate follow-up measures.

6. Meanwhile, the REO has taken some immediate measures since January 2012 to improve the existing VR system. The measures include enhancement of publicity on the importance for new registration to provide true and correct information and for registered electors to update their residential addresses. The enhanced publicity includes the letters mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

Timetable for Voter Registration and Publication of Registers

7. 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 and vote in elections. Eligible persons should apply to the REO for registration. Registration can be made at 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 to be published in that year. The deadline for registration for 2012 is 16 May.

8. Once registered, there is no need for electors to register again. However, if there is any change in their registration particulars (their residential address in particular), an elector should report to the REO by the annual deadline so that the changes can be reflected in the registers of electors to be published in that year. The deadline for registered electors to update their particulars for 2012 is 29 June.

9. In accordance with the relevant legislation, the 2012 provisional register (“PR”) will be published on or before 15 June 2012 for public inspection. During the public inspection period from 15 June to 29 June 2012, the public may make a claim on or an objection to an entry of the PR. The statutory deadline for registered electors to apply for updating their registration particulars is also 29 June 2012. After settling the claims and objections, and processing the applications for updating registration particulars, the final register (“FR”) will be published on or before 25 July 2012.

10. The statutory deadlines and procedures for voter registration in 2012 are set out at **Annex A**.

Main Features of the 2012 Voter Registration Campaign

Objectives

11. Our overall objectives for the 2012 VR Campaign are to:
- (a) promote general awareness of the coming LegCo Election;
 - (b) call upon eligible electors of all age groups to register and to stress the importance of providing true and correct information in application for registration;
 - (c) impress upon registered electors the importance to update their particulars (especially their residential addresses) with the REO;
 - (d) encourage registered electors and persons who would like to register as electors to provide their email addresses on a voluntary basis. The email address will be provided to the candidates of the constituencies concerned for the purpose of sending election advertisements; and
 - (e) encourage registered electors to cast vote in the 2012 LegCo Election.

12. In the light of recent public concern on the accuracy of information recorded in the voter registers, during the 2012 VR Campaign, we will also take the opportunity to strengthen the message on the importance for new registration to provide true and correct information and for registered electors to update their residential addresses.

Timing

13. Similar to the VR campaigns in recent years, we propose that the 2012 VR campaign for new registration should last for about six weeks, running from **late March to 16 May 2012**, while the publicity to remind registered electors to update their particulars with the REO will last until 29 June 2012.

Strategy

14. We will adopt a multi-pronged approach under which we will organise a variety of activities to bring in as many valid VR applications and notifications of change in particulars as possible. These activities will be supported by awareness-raising publicity items.

Activities

15. A launching ceremony will be held in late March 2012. Throughout the campaign period, we will set up roving registration counters at popular locations (for example, major MTR stations and shopping malls) for Voter Registration Assistants (“VRAs”) to assist the public in registering as electors or updating their registration particulars. The VRAs will also distribute to the public a leaflet prepared by the Independent Commission Against Corruption on the importance to provide the REO with true and correct information when applying for registration as electors or reporting changes in registration particulars, as well as the consequences of voting at an election after knowingly or recklessly giving false or misleading information to the REO.

16. To encourage more young people to register, we will:

- (a) reach out to the young people through new media such as Facebook and YouTube;
- (b) 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;

- (c) send VR forms to secondary schools and higher education institutions, and seek their assistance to collect forms from students who are eligible for registration; and
- (d) deploy VRAs to 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 2011-12 school year.

17. To target registered electors who have changed addresses, the VRAs will conduct visits or household visits to new residential developments with intake in recent years (if permission is given). In addition:

- (a) we will write to all households which have moved into new private developments to remind registered electors there 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 address² to households which are identified to have moved into new public housing estates through cross-matching of the records of the Housing Department and the Housing Society with that of the REO; and
- (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.

18. Separately, REO will send appeal letters and notification letters to encourage and 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.

² REO will send notification letters to registered electors in these households, and will update the addresses of these registered electors unless they indicate objection.

19. With the objective of reducing paper consumption in elections, we aim to encourage more registered electors and persons who would like to register as electors to provide their email addresses with a view to furnishing them to candidates for sending their election advertisements. REO has set up a platform at the GovHK website to facilitate registered electors for providing or updating their email addresses. A dedicated email account is also in place to receive requests from registered electors to provide or update their email addresses. It will be complemented by a dedicated radio API appealing to registered electors to provide their email addresses. In addition, VRAs at Registration of Persons Offices and roving registration counters will encourage registered electors and persons who wish to register as electors to provide their email addresses when filling in their application forms.

Publicity items

20. The above activities will be supported by a range of publicity items to arouse the awareness of the community. The publicity items will feature messages as appropriate to achieve the objectives in paragraph 11 above. The publicity items will include TV and radio APIs, mini-concerts and radio programmes, placement of advertisements in newspapers, at major MTR stations and on public transport vehicles, and display of posters, buntings and banners. To create greater impact, we will appoint celebrities as VR Ambassadors who will be featured in the TV and radio APIs. A dedicated website will also be set up, with hyperlinks on Government websites and websites which young people may browse through frequently.

21. A summary table of the activities and publicity items is at **Annex B**.

Financial Implications

22. The cost of sending the letters in paragraph 3 above was met by REO's allocation in 2011-12. For the 2012 VR Campaign, a total amount of \$36 million has been earmarked in 2012-13, including publicity and operating expenses for processing the registration forms received and for compiling and publishing the PR and FR. Sufficient provision for this purpose has been included under REO's Head of Expenditure for 2012-13.

Consultation with the Electoral Affairs Commission

23. We will consult the Electoral Affairs Commission on the proposals set out in this paper.

Advice Sought

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

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau Registration and Electoral Office

March 2012

Ref.: CMAB C1/30/6/1

Statutory Deadlines Concerning Voter Registration in 2012

Date	Major Event	Relevant Legislation
16 May 2012	The statutory deadline for an applicant to apply to the Electoral Registration Officer (“ERO”) for registration in the provisional register (“PR”) is 16 May 2012.	According to section 4 of Cap. 541A ¹ and section 19 of Cap. 541B ² .
25 May 2012	<p>If the ERO requires an applicant to provide further particulars relating to the application, the statutory deadline for an applicant to provide such particulars is 25 May 2012.</p> <p>After finishing all the registration procedures, the ERO has to compile the registration particulars, and to arrange for printing, checking and binding of the PR and omissions list (“OL”), for subsequent sorting and distribution to the District Offices for public inspection.</p>	According to section 5 of Cap. 541A and section 21 of Cap. 541B.
15 June 2012	The statutory deadline for the ERO to publish and make available the PR and OL for public inspection is 15 June 2012.	According to section 10 and 13 of Cap. 541A and section 25 and 29 of Cap. 541B.
29 June 2012	After inspecting the PR and OL, the statutory deadline for the public to make an objection to or make a claim on the registration in the PR, or to apply for updating the registration particulars in the final register (“FR”), is 29 June 2012.	According to section 10, 13, 14, 15 and 17 of Cap. 541A, and section 25, 29, 30, 31 and 33 of Cap. 541B.

¹ “Cap. 541A” stands for the Electoral Affairs Commission (Registration of Electors) (Legislative Council Geographical Constituencies) (District Council Constituencies) (Cap. 541A).

² “Cap. 541B” stands for the Electoral Affairs Commission (Registration) (Electors for Legislative Council Functional Constituencies) (Voters for Election Committee Subsectors) (Members of Election Committee) Regulation (Cap. 541B).

Date	Major Event	Relevant Legislation
15 June to 11 July 2012	<p>The ERO must deliver to the revising officer (“RO”) a copy of each notice of objection or notice of claim received. The RO will fix a hearing for each notice of objection or notice of claim concerning voter registration, and may review the ruling. With the approval of the RO, the ERO will correct an entry, make an additional entry or remove an entry as may be appropriate when compiling the FR.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the ERO will determine the applications for updating registration particulars, and with the approval of the RO, correct an entry, make an additional entry or remove an entry as may be appropriate.</p>	According to section 16 and 18 of Cap. 541A and section 32 and 34 of Cap. 541B.
11 to 25 July 2012	After updating the entries, the ERO has to compile the registration particulars, and to arrange for printing, checking and binding of the FR, for subsequent sorting and distribution to the District Offices for public inspection.	
25 July 2012	The statutory deadline for the ERO to publish and make available the FR for public inspection is 25 July 2012.	According to section 20 of Cap. 541A and section 38 of Cap. 541B.

2012 Voter Registration Campaign

<u>Responsible Bureaux/ Departments</u>	<u>Key Activities</u>
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall coordination of the voter registration (“VR”) campaign
Home Affairs Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 to residential developments with new intake in recent years (if permission is given)
Registration and Electoral Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● VR counters at Registration of Persons Offices, government offices and higher education institutions ● Send appeal letters together with registration forms to all households in new private residential developments through the Circular Service of Hongkong Post ● Send appeal letters and notifications to eligible electors in functional constituencies and umbrella organisations ● Placement of advertisements in newspapers, trade journals of umbrella organisations and flash banners on the internet ● Press release ● Hotline service to handle public enquiries related to voter registration ● Dedicated voter registration website and hyperlinks to the website

**Responsible Bureaux/
Departments**

Key Activities

Information Services
Department

- Production of Announcements in the Public Interest (“APIs”) for broadcast on television and radio
- Broadcast of TV APIs on public transport and other media channels
- Production of mini-concerts and radio programmes by Commercial Radio and Metro Broadcast
- Display of giant wall banners at Government buildings
- Display of posters and advertisements at MTR stations and on public transport vehicle bodies

Radio Television
Hong Kong

- Launching ceremony
- Radio trailers for broadcast
- Online engagement exercise