

**Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs
2015 Voter Registration Campaign**

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the outline of the preparatory work for the 2015 Voter Registration (“VR”) Campaign.

Background

2. The 2015 District Council (“DC”) Election will be held in November 2015. In line with past practice during election years, we will organise a large-scale VR campaign. An inter-departmental working group (“the Working Group”), comprising representatives from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), Home Affairs Department, Information Services Department, Independent Commission Against Corruption (“ICAC”) and Radio Television Hong Kong, has been formed to coordinate the related publicity work. The Working Group is developing work plans to set out the details of the campaign.

Timetable for 2015 VR and publication of registers

3. Under the current legislation, Hong Kong permanent residents who have reached 18 years of age, holding an identity document 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. The deadline for registration in 2015 is 2 July¹. According to the existing electoral laws, eligible persons who would like to register as electors but have yet to do so must submit their applications on or before 2 July 2015 so that their registration particulars can be included in the final register (“FR”) to be published in September 2015, and that they can vote in elections conducted thereafter.

4. There is no need for electors who have been recorded in the FR published in July 2014 to register again. However, if there is any change in their registration particulars such as their residential addresses, they should

¹ On 10 July 2014, the Legislative Council passed the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2014. The amendments include advancing the deadline for VR application for Geographical Constituencies, Functional Constituencies and Election Committee Subsectors by 14 calendar days, in order to provide ten more calendar days to the public for inspecting the provisional register and the omissions list and making claims and objections, and four more calendar days to the Revising Officer for arranging hearings for claims and objections. The new deadlines have already taken effect in the 2015 VR cycle.

notify the REO by 25 August 2015 so that the updated particulars can be reflected in the FR to be published on or before 25 September 2015.

5. Pursuant to the relevant legislation, the 2015 provisional register (“PR”) and the omissions list will be published by 1 August for public inspection. During the period of public inspection from 1 August to 25 August 2015, the public may lodge claims or objections against the entries on the PR and the omissions lists. After the claims and objections are heard and determined by the Revising Officer, the REO will publish the FR on or before 25 September 2015.

Main Features of the 2015 VR Campaign

Objectives

6. The overall objectives for the 2015 VR Campaign are to:
- (a) promote general awareness of the DC Election to be held in November 2015;
 - (b) call upon eligible persons to register as electors;
 - (c) remind registered electors to fulfil their civic responsibility and duly notify the REO of any change in their residential addresses;
 - (d) encourage registered electors and persons who would like to register as electors to provide their email addresses to the REO. 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 2015 DC Election.

In the light of public concern on the accuracy of residential addresses recorded in the voter registers in recent years, we shall step up publicity during the 2015 VR Campaign to impress upon the public the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration and remind registered electors to update their residential addresses. Furthermore, the REO will continue to implement checking measures and inquiry process in the 2015 VR cycle to improve the accuracy and completeness of VR records. The checking measures include cross-matching of residential addresses of electors with the Housing Department, the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Home Affairs Department; checks on residential addresses with multiple electors or multiple surnames of electors; random sample checks on electors contained in the 2014 FR; checks on

addresses with incomplete information, commercial addresses or suspected non-residential addresses; follow-up action on undelivered poll cards for 2014 DC by-elections; checks on addresses situated at buildings already demolished or vacated buildings pending demolition; and random sample checks on new applications for registration.

Timing

7. The 2015 VR campaign for new registration will last from mid-May to the statutory registration deadline of 2 July for about six to seven weeks. Furthermore, publicity to remind registered electors to update their particulars with the REO will last until 25 August 2015 (i.e. the statutory deadline for reporting change of registration particulars in the 2015 cycle).

Activities

8. We shall adopt a multi-pronged approach under which we will organise a variety of activities to solicit as many valid VR applications as possible and remind electors to update their registration particulars with the REO. These activities will be supported by a series of publicity measures.

9. Throughout the campaign period, we shall set up roving registration counters at Registration of Persons Offices, government offices, higher education institutions and locations with high public patronage, and deploy Voter Registration Assistants (“VRAs”) to assist the public in registering as electors or updating their registration particulars. The REO will continue to set up VR counters at venues of major recruitment examinations organised by the Civil Service Bureau to appeal to and assist the candidates (mainly young people) to register as electors. The REO will also approach other government departments and institutions to identify large-scale functions (such as exhibitions and job fairs) for setting up VR counters for distribution of registration forms and provision of registration service.

10. We plan to reach out to persons of different age groups and background through community publicity programmes, as part of our effort to encourage VR and updating of residential addresses with the REO after moving home. We shall also distribute leaflets prepared by the ICAC to remind the public of the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration as electors; as well as the message that any person who knowingly or recklessly gives false or misleading information to the REO, will commit an offence regardless of whether the person concerned has voted at an election or not.

11. To address the issue of the electors failing to update their particulars with the REO after moving home, apart from strengthening publicity efforts, we will deploy VRAs to conduct household visits to new residential developments where permission is given. We shall also continue to:

- (a) write to all households in new private developments and public housing estates to remind them to report changes in address and appeal to persons who have yet to register as electors to register early;
- (b) render assistance in updating residential addresses of households moved into new public housing estates through cross-matching of the records of the Housing Department and the Housing Society with those of the REO; and
- (c) collaborate with the Immigration Department and update the registration particulars of the electors based on the latest residential addresses that the Department receives, provided that the persons concerned have given consent for such data transfer.

12. According to the 2014 FR, there are about 3.5 million Geographical Constituencies electors, representing a registration rate of 73.5%. The registration rate of eligible young people aged between 18 and 30 is 59.7%. To encourage more young people to register, we shall carry out the following activities:

- (a) in addition to traditional publicity channels, the REO will disseminate VR message that appeals to eligible persons in different age groups (including young people) through social media to encourage them to register as electors;
- (b) registration counters will be set up at the five Registration of Persons Offices under the Immigration Department to encourage and help young people register when they visit these offices to apply for or collect their adult identity cards;
- (c) VR forms and posters will be sent to higher education institutions and secondary schools and their assistance will be solicited to collect VR forms submitted by their students; and
- (d) VRAs will be deployed to higher education institutions to assist eligible students to register. For senior secondary students, we have continued the school visit programme in the 2014-15 school year to appeal to students turning 18 to register as electors.

Publicity measures

13. In addition to the above activities, we shall launch a series of publicity measures to raise the awareness of the community about VR, and coordinate with the ICAC to remind the public of the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration. We are working out the publicity measures and plan to adopt the following means:

- (a) production of Announcements in the Public Interest on VR for broadcast on television, radio and other media, government websites and at government buildings;
- (b) radio and television programmes;
- (c) press release and newspaper advertisements;
- (d) advertisements at MTR stations and other means of public transport;
- (e) printed publicity materials including leaflets, posters, banners and appeal letters;
- (f) giant publicity banners for display at external walls of government buildings;
- (g) electronic advertisements on websites and mobile applications;
- (h) distribution of publicity leaflets together with water bills in order to appeal to the public to register as electors, remind electors to duly update their residential addresses with the REO after moving home, and remind the public of the importance of providing true and accurate information for registration. From September to December 2014, we have sent leaflets together with water bills to some 2 million households to promote the use of the newly launched “Online Voter Information Enquiry System” (OVIES). A sample of the promotional leaflet is at Annex;
- (i) sending appeal letters and registration forms by post to households in new private residential developments;
- (j) promotional items such as banners, buntings and posters for display in all districts;
- (k) mobile exhibition vehicle to tour around different districts to promulgate the message of clean elections; and
- (l) hotline service for handling public enquiries related to VR.

We have been using new media channels in recent years for more extensive and efficient dissemination of information to the public, with a view to enhancing the publicity efforts and the effectiveness of the publicity measures. At the same time, we shall further promote the OVIES launched in September 2014, through the above-mentioned publicity measures so as to encourage electors to use the new system which provides a simple and quick means for checking registration particulars with a view to submitting applications for change of particulars in a timely manner when necessary, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the voter registers.

Estimated Expenditure

14. The budget for the 2015 VR campaign is about \$50 million including the afore-mentioned programmes and related publicity measures, as well as the operating expenses and the cost of temporary staff for processing the registration forms received and for compiling and publishing the PR and FR. Sufficient provision for this purpose will be included under REO's Head of Expenditure for 2015-16

Consultation with the Electoral Affairs Commission

15. We shall consult the Electoral Affairs Commission on the proposals for the 2015 VR campaign so as to work out relevant details.

Advice Sought

16. Members are invited to give views on the paper.

**Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Registration and Electoral Office
December 2014**

Online Voter Information Enquiry System is launched

www.voterinfo.gov.hk



You are welcome to log in to the system to check:

- whether you are a registered elector
- whether your registered address is your principal place of residence
- your District Council Constituency Area, Legislative Council Geographical Constituency, Functional Constituency and Election Committee Subsector

Electors who have changed their residential addresses or other particulars should fulfil their civic responsibility by notifying the Registration and Electoral Office as soon as possible.

Forms are available at:

- Registration and Electoral Office
- District Offices
- Management offices of public housing estates
- Voter registration website



Electors should provide clear and accurate registration particulars. A person who gives false information would breach the relevant electoral laws.



Registration and Electoral Office
Enquiries hotline: 2891 1001

