

08.08.2006

SAFEGUARDS AIMED AT PREVENTING (I) MULTIPLE VOTING (II) OTHER FORMS OF SKULDUGGERY, AND (III) ANY POTENTIAL FOR DISSATISFACTION ON ELECTION DAY

1. Identification of the Voter

Before an elector is allowed to vote, he/she will be properly identified as the person he/she claims to be. In order to facilitate this, GECOM has placed electors' photographs alongside their names on the folio at the Polling Stations. When an elector goes to the Polling Station to vote, an Election Official will first look at his/her face and compare it with the photograph on his/her ID card. The Election Official will then compare the photograph on the ID card with the one alongside the elector's name on the folio to confirm that he/she is the same person. If the Official is satisfied that the elector is who he/she is claiming to be, he/she will then be processed for voting. On the other hand, if any divergence is noted, the elector will be subjected to questioning, and possibly, be arrested immediately.

2. The Use of Indelible Ink

In the voting process, electors will be required to dip the first joint of their right index fingers in indelible ink. In the past, some persons had claimed to be able to completely wash off the indelible ink from their fingers. This will not be possible at the 2006 elections because the indelible ink to be used is of such improved strength that, no matter how hard one tries, one cannot completely wash it off. Further, the wet ink on their finger tips will not be wiped off as has been the practice in past elections. Before electors are allowed to vote, their fingers will be examined for traces of indelible ink. If traces of indelible ink are found on an elector's fingers, it will be presumed that he/she had already voted and will not be allowed to vote again. Subsequently, he/she will be subjected to questioning, and possibly, be arrested immediately.

3. Party Agents

There will be Political Party Agents at the Polling Stations throughout the elections process on Election Day to witness the physical identification of voters and the examination of their hands for traces of indelible ink. Also, if a Party Agent has good reason to believe that the potential elector is not the person he/she claims to be, or that he/she has not already voted, the Party Agent can bring this to the notice of the Presiding Officer. This will result in the potential elector being questioned, and possibly, being arrested immediately.

4. The Presence of Security Personnel from the Guyana Police Force

Ranks from the Guyana Police Force will be present at all Polling Stations throughout Election Day to assist the Presiding Officers in ensuring that the election process is executed in a lawful and orderly

manner. In addition, personnel from the Disciplined Services will be stationed at the GECOM Headquarters and at all of GECOM's Annexes.

NB: There is the feeling (real or imagined) that the political Party Agents can be terrorised into leaving the PSs prematurely. At those PSs where there is the possibility (real or perceived) of the bullying/terrorising of Party Agents, Police ranks will be present in such numbers as to negate this possibility. Political Parties can assist GECOM in identifying such vulnerable PSs and should be placing Agents of such calibre that they would resist any intimidation.

#### 5. Voter Education

GECOM has embarked on a highly publicised voter education campaign aimed at informing electors about their rights and responsibilities as voters, and to dissuade them from becoming involved in skulduggery (please see attached specimen brochure). Emphasis is placed on the reasons why electors should not become involved in the conduct of any of the listed electoral offences and the penalties associated with those offences. GECOM is making it known clearly that it is committed to having persons, if they are found to be engaging themselves in any of the electoral offences, promptly arrested. It is expected that this campaign will discourage persons from attempting to engage in multiple voting or other forms of skulduggery.

#### 6. Efficient Conduct of the Polls

During the training of Returning Officers, Presiding Officers and all other levels of Polling Day staff, emphasis was placed on the need for them to always carry out their respective responsibilities in a manner that will not cast any shadow of doubt on the election process and the emerging results. GECOM has emphasised that Polling Day staff would be held accountable, even prosecuted, for any irregularity which could result in the outcome of the elections being besmirched.

#### 7. Absent Electors/Deceased Electors

Deceased electors whose names are possibly still on the voters' list cannot and will not present themselves to vote. The photographs on the folios at each Polling Station will preclude anyone from trying to vote in the place of deceased electors. So too will be the case of registered electors who are out of Guyana on Election Day. Other persons will be unable to vote on their behalf simply because of the photographs against the electors' names in the folio. (Please see Appendix I).

#### 8. Counting of Ballots at Place of Poll

As provided for by law ballots cast will be counted at the respective Places of Poll. Each Presiding Officer will sign the Statement of Poll. Each of the Party Agents present will also sign as an attestation that he/she is satisfied with the counting and recording of the votes. Thereafter, the Presiding Officer will (i) publicly declare the results of the elections at his/her Polling Station, (ii) give a signed copy of the results to each Party Agent, and (iii) post the results at a noticeable place at the Polling Station.

9. Domestic and International Observers

Domestic and International Observers that have been accredited by GECOM will be monitoring the election process countrywide with a view to contributing to it being conducted in accordance with international best practice. Domestic observers include the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), the Guyana Bar Association (GBA), the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) and the Private Sector Commission (PSC). The International Observers will include the Commonwealth Long/Short Term Observer Missions, the Organisation of American States (OAS) Long/Short Term Observer Missions, the European Union Assessors, the two Joint International Technical Assessors (JITAs), members of the Diplomatic Community in Guyana, and possibly, a European Union Parliamentary Mission and one from the Carter Centre.

10. Assistance from Political Parties

GECOM calls upon all Political Parties and other Social/Civic Organisations to appeal to their respective supporters and membership not to attempt in any way to thwart the successful conduct of the elections by attempting to vote more than once, or from acting in any manner which could impede the successful conduct of the elections. In fact, all Political Parties and other Social/Civic Organisations are invited to caution their supporters/membership that any attempt to so do would result in them being immediately being arrested and prosecuted. This could result in them being fined or jailed or both, and possibly banned from voting at future elections.

11. Transparent Ballot Boxes

The transparency of the voting process will be buttressed by the use of transparent ballot boxes that have been procured with specifically with this objective in mind. This move will guarantee that the contents of the ballot boxes are always in view of all categories of personnel and stakeholders having access to the PSs.

Dr. Steve Surujbally, A.A.

Chairman

Guyana Elections Commission

## APPENDIX I

There are those who contend that the 2006 Official List of Electors (OLE) contains the names of persons not resident in Guyana and who will not be present in Guyana on Polling Day. Further, it is argued, that a political Party or unscrupulous persons, motivated by their support for a political party will find it possible to cast a vote for those registered but absent Guyanese electors, or for those registered persons under 18 years of age or for those who are deceased.

In an attempt to assuage such concerns, please be advised of the following:-

- (i) Perfidious political parties/unscrupulous persons would have to first procure the names of deceased persons, the names of permanent émigrés, the names of <18 year olds and the names on a "Not Found" list.
- (ii) The perfidious political party (parties)/unscrupulous persons would have to mobilize substitute voters to match the details pertaining to the émigrés, the deceased, the "Not Found" and the <18 year olds.
- (iii) Having gathered such substitute voters, the perfidious political party (parties)/unscrupulous persons will have to deploy them countrywide to the relevant Polling Stations on Elections Day.

Please be reminded that such persons have to vote for themselves. That would entail much running around and great attempts to remove the irremovable finger stain.

- (iv) These substitute voters will have to show genuine ID cards at the respective Polling Stations. These ID cards must have photos similar to the unscrupulous persons standing in front of the Presiding Officer and his/her team. They can get them from (a) the émigrés/deceased/under <18 year olds/Not Found or (b) from GECOM which would have to print ID cards for the substitute voters. GECOM IS NOT IN ANY SUCH CONSPIRACY!! Such an activity would become known immediately.

ADDENDUM I

TO

SAFEGUARDS AIMED AT PREVENTING (I) MULTIPLE VOTING (II) OTHER FORMS OF SKULDUGGERY, AND (III) ANY POTENTIAL FOR DISSATISFACTION ON ELECTION DAY

DISPLACED ELECTORS

GECOM acknowledges that, in the past, there had been the existence of cases of persons being listed to vote in electoral divisions other than those in which they live. In recognition of these episodes, and in cognizance of the related concerns raised by political parties, we developed and implemented a deliberate strategy aimed at ensuring that every elector is correctly listed in the 2006 Official List of Electors to vote in his/her electoral division. This strategy involved the following:-

1.. Ensuring accuracy in the completion of all categories of Registration Forms.

2.. Checking every entry on the 2006 Revised List of Electors (at the level of the Registration Officer for each Registration District) for persons falling in the category of displaced electors. This also involved the identification of addresses which do not exist within the respective Divisions.

2.1. Upon the discovery of a displaced elector, an Administrative Form is filled out with the elector's particulars. This Form is routed to the GECOM's Registration Division for ratification before being sent to the IT Division for the required correction to be effected.

3.. The IT Division has checked every entry from the Continuous Registration process with the respective source documents (Registration Forms) to determine whether, at the inputting stage, any error was committed. Any identified error would have immediately been corrected.

4.. Windows of opportunities were given to displaced electors to effect the necessary corrections during the Claims and Objections, and Display of the Revised List of Electors periods.

The implementation of this strategy resulted in the identification and correction of 1,491 entries associated with displaced electors. It must be noted that, in the majority of cases, the dislocations were associated with electoral sub-divisions within close proximity to each other.

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ADDENDUM II

TO

SAFEGUARDS AIMED AT PREVENTING (I) MULTIPLE VOTING (II) OTHER FORMS OF SKULDUGGERY, AND (III) ANY POTENTIAL FOR DISSATISFACTION ON ELECTION DAY

INCREASED NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS

GECOM is aware of a claim that the number of Polling Stations countrywide for the 2006 elections was significantly lower than those established for the 2001 elections although the number of electors now is greater than in 2001. This claim is far removed from the reality. In fact, the number of Polling Stations for the 2006 elections is in excess of 1,990. This represents a significant increase when compared to the number of Polling Stations for the 2001 elections (1,893). As a result of the increase in the number of Polling Stations for the 2006 elections, none of them will have to cater to more than 450 listed electors. Contrastingly, at the 2001 elections, in excess of 500 electors were registered to vote at some Polling Stations.

We must note that it is precisely because we recognized that the number of registered electors is now considerably increased that we took the conscious decision to increase the number of Polling Stations with a view to providing electors with improved conditions for them to be able to cast their votes with more ease.

Also, it must be noted that sensitivity of location and facility to access relative to the placement of Polling Stations were taken into consideration.

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