

We agree with Mr Albert Ng Ya Ken (“Elected president. Good to educate Singaporeans about the role”, June 20) that it is important to educate Singaporeans on the role of the elected President as well as the eligibility criteria to stand for election as President.

2 The role and qualifications of the President are spelt out in our Constitution. The President is the Head of State and the symbol of national unity. The President exercises custodial powers as conferred by the Constitution. The President has no independent political role and must act in accordance with the advice of the Cabinet, especially when expressing views on legislation or Government policy. The exception is matters related to the President’s custodial powers, which the President exercises in the President’s discretion.

3 To qualify as a candidate for election as President, a candidate must meet the qualifications set out in our Constitution, including satisfying the Presidential Elections Committee (PEC) of having met either the public sector or private sector service requirements. There have been some discussions on the private sector service requirement, specifically under Article 19(4)(a) and (b) of the Constitution.

4 Articles 19(4)(a) and 19(4)(b) are alternative ways of satisfying the private sector service requirement. Under Article 19(4)(a), the candidate must be the chief executive of a company for 3 or more years, and the company must have, among other things, at least \$500 million in shareholders’ equity for the most recent 3-year period for which the candidate was the chief executive. The company must also be profitable after tax for the entire time the candidate was the chief executive.

5 Alternatively, under Article 19(4)(b), the candidate must have 3 or more years of service in an office in a private sector organisation, and the PEC must be satisfied that the candidate has the experience and ability comparable to that of a person who has served as the chief executive of a typical company with at least the minimum amount of shareholders’ equity [i.e. \$500 million] and who satisfies Article 19(4)(a). The PEC must also be satisfied that the person has the experience and ability to effectively carry out the functions and duties of the office of President.

6 We will continue our public outreach and work closely with the media to raise awareness about the elected presidency. We encourage readers to visit our website at <https://www.eld.gov.sg> for more details on the eligibility criteria and the role of the President.

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