

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CAMPAIGNING GUIDELINES FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2023**

1 Polling Day for the Presidential Election will be held on 1 September 2023, Friday (if contested). As the office is the highest position in the land, election campaigning should befit the dignity and role of the President.

#### **Guiding principles for the election campaign**

2 The form of a Presidential Election campaign should differ fundamentally from that of a General Election campaign given the different roles that the elected President and the elected government perform.

3 The President should remain above the political fray. It is not his role to support or oppose the Government of the day or to advance his own agenda or policies.

4 Under the Constitution, the President has important ceremonial and representational roles as Head of State. He represents and promotes Singapore's interests abroad. His key role is to be the custodian of Singapore's reserves and to ensure that only people of integrity are appointed to key public sector jobs. The President should have the direct mandate of the people to perform these important national functions on their behalf.

5 The focus of the Presidential Election campaign should therefore be on the suitability and integrity of candidates to discharge these functions, while maintaining the dignity of the office.

#### **Key elements of the election campaign**

6 Prospective candidates must read the explanatory material prior to making a statutory declaration in the Nomination Paper that they understand the role of the President under the Constitution. They are also encouraged to undertake that they will conduct their election campaign in a manner that is dignified, decorous and consistent with the President's position as the Head of State and the symbol of national unity.

#### **Use of TV for campaigning**

7 Television will be a key medium of the campaign because of its national reach. It also allows voters to assess the candidates in a manner in keeping with the decorum and dignity of the office of President.

8 Each candidate will be allocated two blocks of 10 minutes' airtime, free of charge, to make his statements across 19 Mediacorp TV channels, and Mediacorp, SPH and SoDrama! radio channels. Mediacorp will record and broadcast these

statements in the form of a “Presidential Candidate Broadcast” (PCB). The first PCB will be televised on 24 August 2023, Thursday; while the second PCB will be televised on 30 August 2023, Wednesday. Candidates may use the four official languages to deliver their campaigning messages during the PCBs. The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) will hold a briefing session on PCBs on 21 August 2023, Monday, at 5.30 pm, at Mediacorp, 1 Stars Avenue, Singapore 138507. Candidates or their representatives can email [eld\\_aro@imda.gov.sg](mailto:eld_aro@imda.gov.sg) to register for the briefing. For more information on the PCBs, please refer to this factsheet ([go.gov.sg/pcb](http://go.gov.sg/pcb)).

### Forums with candidates

9 Mediacorp’s televised Presidential Forum will be broadcast live on CNA on 28 August 2023, Monday, with livestreams on CNA’s YouTube channel and Facebook page. There will be a repeat telecast of the Forum on Channel 5 on 29 August 2023, Tuesday.

10 SPH Media’s video, recorded “as live”, will have presidential candidates answer questions from younger Singaporeans. It will be released on The Straits Times website and social media platforms on 27 August 2023, Sunday.

### Online campaigning

11 Online campaigning is another way candidates can reach out to voters, such as through publishing election advertising on social media platforms, websites, and emails. Candidates are to comply with the rules for Online Election Advertising (OEA) in the Presidential Elections Act 1991 and Presidential Elections (Election Advertising) Regulations 2023, which are put in place to ensure transparency and accountability.

12 Candidates and voters must not make, exhibit, or distribute party political films.<sup>1</sup>

### Publication of exit polls and election surveys

13 In accordance with the Presidential Elections Act 1991, the publication of results of election surveys and exit polls – such as a poll on who the voters are likely to vote for, or have voted for – is disallowed from the day that the Writ of Election is issued until Polling Day, both days inclusive.

### Election meetings (rallies or gatherings at assembly centres)

14 Candidates are encouraged to use platforms that reach out to voters at large such as TV broadcasts and social media.

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<sup>1</sup> The Films Act 1981 defines a party political film as a film ‘which is an advertisement made by or on behalf of any political party in Singapore or anybody whose objects relate wholly or mainly to politics in Singapore, or any branch of such party or body’. It is also one ‘which is made by any person and directed towards any political end in Singapore’. Examples of party political films are films that employ dramatisation and/or animation to distort, sensationalise or mislead viewers on political matters.

15 Rallies, by their nature and format, may be divisive and not congruent with the unifying role of the Elected Presidency. Hence, rallies are not encouraged and there will be no designated rally sites for Presidential Elections. Candidates who nevertheless wish to hold election meetings must first obtain the approval of the premises or site owner before applying for a Police permit. Due to safety and security considerations, it is preferable that election meetings, if any, be held at sports stadiums or indoor venues.

16 Applications for a Police permit may only be submitted after the close of nomination proceedings. The application must be submitted at least two days before the intended date of the election meeting, by the designated time.<sup>2</sup> Candidates who wish to apply for a permit to hold an election meeting may do so online via the Singapore Police Force website ([www.police.gov.sg/e-services](http://www.police.gov.sg/e-services)).

#### Perambulating vehicles

17 Candidates may use vehicles to broadcast pre-recorded election messages during the campaign period. They must apply for and obtain a police permit to do so. Candidates are not allowed to give speeches from the vehicles or provide public entertainment during the broadcast. Vehicles with open decks are not allowed to carry any persons on the open deck.

18 Candidates who wish to apply for a perambulating vehicle permit may do so online via the Singapore Police Force website ([www.police.gov.sg/e-services](http://www.police.gov.sg/e-services)).

#### Public display of traditional election advertising

19 Public display of traditional election advertising (i.e. non-online election advertising in the form of a banner, flag or poster) must comply with the Presidential Elections Act 1991 and the Presidential Elections (Election Advertising) Regulations 2023, and must not contain illegal content such as seditious materials or materials that may cause alarm and distress.

20 Candidates may campaign using banners, flags and posters as long as they comply with the controls on quantity, size, location, manner of and period of display and any further conditions stated in the Returning Officer's permit.

21 If any banner, flag or poster does not adhere to the conditions stated in the Returning Officer's permit; or does not comply with the controls on the quantity, size, location, manner of and period of display, the Returning Officer may direct the unauthorised banner, flag or poster to be removed. Candidates are required to bear the expenses to remove each unauthorised banner, flag or poster. The amount to be borne for each removal is \$50, and this is recoverable as a debt due to the Government. The cost of recovery must be included as part of the candidates' election expenses.

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<sup>2</sup> Applications must be submitted at least two days before the intended election meeting date. The earliest day for an election meeting to be held is two days after Nomination Day. Applications for election meeting to be held on this day (two days after Nomination Day) must be submitted by 4.00 pm on Nomination Day. Applications for election meetings to be held on other campaigning days must be submitted by 11.00 am at least two days before the election meeting.

## Campaigning by political parties and civic organisations on behalf of a candidate

22 Under the Presidential Elections Act 1991, any person who conducts activities to promote or procure the election of a candidate, must be individually authorised in writing by the candidate or his election agent, on or after Nomination Day.

23 The position of the President is non-partisan. Political parties should not be involved in campaigning using their party names and symbols in support of a candidate.

24 Civic, business or professional bodies that wish to participate in any political activity or allow their funds or premises to be used for political purposes need to ensure that their constitutions allow them to do so, and that they do not contravene any laws that they are subject to. Such political activities include endorsing certain candidates and publishing advertisements or issuing press statements to express support for a candidate. Advertisements or statements that amount to election advertising should comply with the Presidential Elections Act 1991.

25 While such bodies would have their own processes to consult their members and consider the merits of supporting a candidate, it remains each individual's right as a voter, regardless of his membership of any organisation, to freely decide whom to support and how to cast his vote.

## Cooling-off period

26 A cooling-off period where all campaigning must stop will be observed during the period starting from the eve of Polling Day and ending when polls close on Polling Day.

## Election financing

27 Candidates must keep within the election expenses limit stipulated in the Presidential Elections Act 1991. The maximum spending limit for election expenses is \$600,000 or 30 cents per elector on the Registers of Electors, whichever is the greater. Based on the number of electors in the registers as of 11 August 2023, the election expenses limit for PE 2023 is \$812,822.10.

28 Under the Political Donations Act 2000, only Singapore citizens who are 21 years or older, or Singapore-controlled companies which carry on business wholly or mainly in Singapore, are allowed to make political donations.

## **Foreign interference, negative campaigning and prohibited persons**

29 Foreign interference includes attempts by foreign actors to manipulate domestic politics through covert and deceptive means, which undermines political sovereignty and harms social cohesion. All Singaporeans should exercise individual vigilance, to safeguard the integrity of elections. Candidates have a responsibility to raise their awareness of potential foreign interference threats and be on the alert for

suspicious behaviours and hidden agendas. They are also recommended to take the following precautions:

- a. fact-check information received to ensure that it is accurate and/or authentic, or from a credible source, before sharing or reacting to it in the context of their election campaign;
- b. monitor their own social media platforms for suspicious or anomalous activity; and
- c. familiarise themselves with and abide by the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act 2021 and the Political Donations Act 2000.

30 Should any candidates suspect that they are the target of foreign interference activities, they should make a police report and keep the Elections Department informed.

31 Only Singapore Citizens can take part in elections and campaigning. Any Singapore Citizen who wants to conduct an election activity (whether online, offline or both) for a candidate must first be in possession of a written authority signed by the candidate or his election agents.

32 Individuals who are below 16 years of age, against whom an order of supervision has been made under section 30(1)(b) of the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act 1955, or who are foreigners<sup>3</sup>, are prohibited from taking part in any election activity. Foreign entities are also not allowed to take part in any election activity.

33 Candidates, their elections agents and their authorised representatives should conduct election campaigning in a responsible and dignified manner that befits the seriousness of the election process. They should steer away from negative campaigning based on hate and denigration of opposing candidates. They should not make false statements, for example, unfounded allegations of corruption or commission of criminal offences, or statements that may cause racial or religious tensions or affect social cohesion.

34 Candidates are advised to familiarise themselves with the Presidential Elections Act 1991 and Presidential Elections (Election Advertising) Regulations 2023 to ensure that their election campaign complies with the law. They may also find more information on campaigning from the ELD website ([go.gov.sg/pe-campaigning](https://go.gov.sg/pe-campaigning)).

**ISSUED BY  
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT  
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
12 August 2023**

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<sup>3</sup> Permanent residents or persons issued with a work pass are exempted under the Presidential Elections (Exemption from section 65(1)(c) and (2)) Regulations 2011, through a contract for service between an authorised person and a candidate or the candidate's election agent, to undertake set-up and tear-down of traditional election advertising and rally sites/assembly centres.