

PRESS RELEASE

UPDATING ELECTION PROCESSES TO ENSURE FREE AND FAIR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SINGAPORE

In 2023, the Parliamentary Elections Act 1954 (PEA) was amended to update and enhance our electoral processes. To operationalise these amendments, the Subsidiary Legislation (SL) under the PEA has also been revised and will come into effect on 14 Jun 2024. The requirements set out in the PEA SL are aligned with the requirements introduced for the 2023 Presidential Election (PE2023), except where they need to be contextualised or are specific to parliamentary elections.

Election Advertising Requirements

2 To support informed voting, the requirements in the SL for election advertising¹ have been updated to enhance:

- a) Transparency, so that voters know who is communicating the election advertising; and
- b) Accountability, by making persons publishing or displaying election advertising responsible for their communications.

3 During the election period², all election advertising will be required to comply with published-by requirements to clearly display:

- a) The full names of all who played an active role in publishing or publicly displaying the election advertising³; and
- b) In the case of paid election advertising, to use words like “sponsored by” or “paid for by”, and the full names of those who paid for the election advertising.

¹ Election advertising refers to any material, paid or unpaid, that can reasonably be regarded as intended to (a) promote or procure the electoral success at any election for one or more identifiable political parties, candidates or groups of candidates; or (b) otherwise enhance the standing of any such political parties, candidates or groups of candidates with the electorate in connection with any election. It also includes any material that can reasonably be regarded as intended to prejudice the electoral prospects of any candidate or to prejudice any candidate’s standing with the electorate.

² The election period starts when the Writ of Election is issued and ends with the close of polling, on Polling Day.

³ These persons are (a) every person who authorised the publication or public display of the election advertising; (b) every person who approved the content of the election advertising; (c) every person who directed the election advertising to be published or publicly displayed; (d) the printer (for printed election advertising); and (e) where all or part of the production or publication or public display of the election advertising was paid for, every person who paid for it.

4 The exceptions to the above are Singapore citizens who are not candidates or election agents, who publish online election advertising⁴ in their personal capacity, did not pay or receive payment, and were not directed by others to do so. These individuals will continue to be exempted from the published-by requirements.

5 The updated requirements also clarify that all paid election advertising will cover payments that are (i) direct and indirect (e.g. through an intermediary), and (ii) monetary and non-monetary. This ensures a level playing field by covering various forms of payment under campaign spending limits.

6 There are updates specific to online election advertising (OEA) and non-online election advertising (NOEA)⁵, as follows:

OEA

7 Amplification of existing OEA (e.g. through boosting, reposting, sharing or resharing) will be subject to the same requirements as publishing new OEA. Amplification of existing OEA increases the reach of the content to more users and has the same effect as publishing fresh content.

8 The Returning Officer has been provided powers to direct any content publisher, including individuals and social media companies, to take all reasonable steps to do one or more of the following with regard to OEA breaches:

- a) Ensure the removal of the OEA;
- b) Disable access to the OEA by Singapore end-users; and
- c) Stop further communication of the OEA to Singapore end-users.

NOEA

9 To enhance regulation of traditional election advertising (TEA)⁶, political parties will be required to declare to the Returning Officer, within 12 hours of the issuance of Writ, the particulars of all TEA bearing political party symbols or party-affiliated symbols that were on display prior to the issuance of the Writ of Election. The TEA declarations will be made available online for public inspection within the same period. The public display of new TEA that contain political party symbols or party-affiliated symbols between the issuance of Writ up to before the start of the campaign period will be disallowed.

⁴ OEA refers to any election advertising accessible from the internet.

⁵ NOEA refers to election advertising that is not online election advertising.

⁶ TEA refers to NOEA in the form of a banner, flag or poster.

10 During the campaign period⁷, TEA can only be publicly displayed by candidates, election agents or third parties authorised in writing by candidates or election agents and publicly displayed only in a positive list of permissible locations specified in the SL. The Returning Officer may direct any unauthorised or non-compliant TEA to be removed. Candidates will be required to bear the expenses when such TEA is removed or stopped from being publicly displayed by the Returning Officer. This cost must be included in the candidates' election expenses.

Overseas Voting and Counting of Overseas Votes

11 The processes for voting at overseas polling stations, postal voting and counting of both types of overseas votes have been set out in the SL of the PEA to align with the processes implemented at the PE2023, except for the following key changes in the counting of overseas votes:

- a) the ballot papers cast at overseas polling stations and postal ballot papers will be sorted by electoral division for counting in a General Election, instead of being consolidated at the national level for counting in a Presidential Election; and
- b) the maximum number of counting agents allowed to be present at the counting centre to observe the counting of overseas votes takes to account the larger number of candidates in a General Election. In a General Election, a maximum of five counting agents per political party, independent candidate, or group of independent candidates will be allowed instead of one counting agent for every 5,000 overseas voters (rounded up to the next whole number) per candidate or a minimum of three counting agents per candidate for PE2023.

Enhancing other Electoral Processes

12 Improvements have been made to the forms under the PEA to align with the changes made to the forms for PE2023, including:

- a) a new section in the Nomination Paper for candidates to provide their names to be printed on the ballot paper; and
- b) a new form for candidates to declare after an election that –
 - i. no foreigner has been authorised by the candidates or their election agents to conduct any election activity; and
 - ii. the conduct of their election activities was not undertaken or authorised by the candidates or election agents under the influence of a foreign principal.

⁷ The campaign period starts immediately after nomination proceedings end on Nomination Day and ends with the start of the eve of Polling Day.

13 In addition, the area demarcated on the ballot paper for a voter to mark his choice has been enlarged so that the X-stamp can be clearly placed within the area for the voter to stamp on. This was in response to feedback during PE2023 that some voters were unsure if they had properly positioned the X-stamp within the demarcated area to mark their votes.

**ISSUED BY
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

31 MAY 2024