

# Press Release



## There are Safeguards aimed at Preventing Multiple Voting and Other Forms of Skulduggery on Elections Day

**7<sup>th</sup> August 2024, GEORGETOWN** – The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has taken note of a Stabroek News article of Saturday, August 3, 2024, titled “AFC calls on GECOM to provide updates for improved electoral system”. In this regard, attention is drawn to the opening salvo of the article which states that “the Alliance For Change has expressed dissatisfaction with the electoral system, especially as it pertains to the voters list”. The article also mentioned that the AFC, in a Press Release, called upon the GECOM Chairman to comment on recommendations made by “the AFC, political parties, and civil society” regarding the adoption of biometrics and electronic voting to enhance electoral integrity”.

Whereas this call from the AFC is nothing new, it is necessary for the Commission to remind all political stakeholders and by extension the general public that Justice of Appeal (Ret'd) Claudette Singh has repeatedly emphasized that the Commission's operations are guided by the laws of Guyana. In this regard, it is of paramount importance to recall that, in so doing the GECOM Chairman has emphasized that GECOM cannot and will not act outside of the extant statutory provisions pertaining to the conduct of National Registration, Local Government Elections and General and Regional Elections. More specifically, it must be emphasized that the introduction of biometrics requires legislative changes and, until such is enabled, GECOM cannot proceed with implementing such a feature.

For the purpose of clarity, it is essential to note that, over an extended period of time, the Chairman facilitated discussions on a Motion that was moved by one Member of the Commission proposing the introduction of digital fingerprint capture during registration, and the introduction of biometric fingerprint identification of voters at polling stations. Discussions on the Motion, by the Commission, led to a decision being taken for a Feasibility Study to be conducted into the viability of introducing digital fingerprint capture and the use of biometrics in line with the Motion. The Feasibility Study has since been completed and copies have been circulated to all members of the Commission for perusal and subsequent deliberations.

As it relates to the AFC's posit that "updating the voters list is crucial for ensuring the integrity of the electoral process, it is of significant importance that we remind all concerned of the decision by the Chief Justice (ag) Roxanne George-Wiltshire pertaining to the removal of names of persons from the National Register of Registrants Database (NRRDB) i.e., the records from which all voters' lists are extracted. This decision of the Chief Justice (ag) was never appealed. Accordingly, GECOM cannot update the NRRDB or any list, or any list extracted therefrom, except by way of the existing legal provisions.

GECOM routinely updates the NRRDB on the basis of reports in relation to deceased persons that are received from the General Register Office by flagging the records of the concerned deceased. Beyond this, voters lists are sanitized and updated through Claims and Objections Exercises. Further, in keeping with the amendments to the National Registration Act, No. 26 of 2022, the Chief Election Officer has written to the Chief Medical Officer and the Commissioner of Police to periodically provide GECOM with reports of deceased persons. Upon receipt of such reports, GECOM will have basis to further sanitize and update the NRR subject to verification of the information received.

Insofar as the integrity of the electoral processes is concerned, there are in existence multiple safeguards aimed at preventing multiple voting and other form of skullduggery on Election Day. The safeguards include, but are not limited to, (i) the presence of political party agents at each polling station, (ii) accurate identification of the voter, (iii) the use of indelible ink, (iv) the presence of security personnel from the Guyana Police Force, (v) the conduct of an intensive voter education campaign, (vi) adequate training of Election Day staff for efficient conduct of the polls, (vii) counting of ballots at the place of poll in the presence of authorized representatives of the contesting parties, and (viii) the presence of local and international observers throughout the voting and counting processes.

More recently, with the objective of assuaging concerns about voting by impersonation on election Day, the Chief Election Officer has submitted a proposal to the Commission for the placement of cameras in Polling Stations to record the activities occurring therein without compromising the secrecy of the ballots. This proposal has been acknowledged by the Commission for deliberations on the way forward.

It is against this backdrop that GECOM takes the opportunity to remind all stakeholders that it will continue to execute its constitutional mandate within the framework, and to guarantee all stakeholders that it will deliver free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

\*\*\*

For media queries, please contact:

Ms. Yolanda Ward  
Public Relations Officer  
Guyana Elections Commission  
pro@gecom.org.gy | 225-0277-9 Ext 187