

Press Release



The National Registration Act outlines the Requirements for Registration

18th November, 2024 GEORGETOWN – The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has noted with much concern an article titled “PNCR polling agents will block foreigners from voting – Norton” published by the Demerara Waves on Sunday, 17th November, 2024. The article explained that Leader of the main opposition People’s National Congress Reform, Mr. Aubrey Norton was addressing a public meeting at Calcutta, Mahaicony when he reportedly stated that **“opposition polling agents would be on the lookout for foreigners who are clearly not connected to Guyana.”**

It is therefore absolutely necessary for GECOM to clarify that in order for any name to be listed on the Official List of Electors (OLE), persons must satisfy the eligibility criteria for registration as stipulated in the National Registration Act, Chapter 19:08. The law provides for a ***Guyanese citizen by birth, descent, naturalization/registration or a citizen of a Commonwealth Country living in Guyana one year or more to be eligible for registration.*** As such once a person has satisfied those requirements and have provided authentic supporting documentation, they are registered in accordance with the legal provisions.

Moreover, it is important to note that scrutineers from the People’s National Congress Reform (PNCR) are permanently present at all GECOM’s Registration Offices countrywide and are actively involved in the registration process, including the signing off on the accuracy of applications for registration transactions.

Further, Mr. Norton also posited that a means of identifying ‘foreigners’ would be when eligible electors are unable to speak proper English. In fact, it must be clarified that Section 72 (10) of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03 makes provision for this category of voters at the place of poll. Specifically, the law stipulates that, ***“whenever in the opinion of the presiding officer an elector does not understand the language spoken to him, he may appoint and swear, in Form 20, an interpreter; and the interpreter, so sworn, shall be the means of communication between the presiding officer and the elector with regard to all matters required to enable the elector to vote.”***

Against this backdrop, GECOM as the constitutional agency that is responsible for the conduct of elections in Guyana is perturbed at Mr. Norton’s mischievous statements that can potentially cause fear and harm to eligible voters exercising their constitutional right on Elections Day. It must be noted however, that Elections are managed by the Guyana Elections Commission and political party agents will have no authority to determine who votes or not. Once, a person’s name is in the OLE, it means that all the necessary legal and administrative scrutiny were done and he/she is qualified to be so listed.

In view of the foregoing, it must be emphasized that an election official or security personnel can be prosecuted for committing election offences such as deliberately obstructing or interfering with the work of an Election Officer and intimidating eligible electors. Consequently, the Guyana Elections Commission is urging political stakeholders to be responsible and cautious about their comments in the public domain as these can potentially have effects on the electoral process and severe consequences.
