

*A Framework
For
Voter Education*

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BACKGROUND

The Objective of “A Framework for Voter Education” is to provide a resource for organizations or individuals who wish to educate Belizeans on the rights and responsibilities of Electors, as well as those desirous of developing curricula in civics. It consists of a collection of salient, topical areas for voter education. For quick reference and easy reading, the presentation is organized in a mix of popular education and brochure style format. Although the content is in detailed summary form, the quantity and variety of topics make this book a one-stop resource for civic education in Belize.

The target audiences are:

Educators

Curriculum Developers

Government Agencies

Political Organizations

Civil Society

Non-governmental Organizations

Youth Groups

Church Groups

Lay Persons

Media Houses

This is all encompassing. The onus will then be on the Users to select the topics that are relevant to their specific target groups.

The information gathered stems from intensive primary and secondary research, resulting in the following self-publications:

- ◆ Who and What in Belizean Elections (1993)
- ◆ Selecting Our Leaders—Past and Present (1999)
- ◆ Brochures (2000 & 2001) on:
 - Election Process
 - Referendum Act
 - About Us
 - Voting Process
- ◆ Election day Guidelines for Political Agents (2002)

- ◆ Guide to Election Officials (2002)

Other useful information was taken from:

- ◆ The Representation of The People Act (ROPA) , Chapter 9, Revised Edition 2000
- ◆ The Belize Constitution Act, Chapter 4, Revised Edition 2000
- ◆ How We Are Governed

Both the ROPA and the **Belize Constitution** have been made available on the information super highway by the Attorney General's Ministry, Belize. The Website address is www.belize.gov.bz. The Elections and Boundaries Department's Website, www.belize-elections.org is updated on a timely basis with information relevant to the registration and voting processes.

Electoral Management Bodies of Belize

THE “WHAT IS”



What is The Elections and Boundaries Commission?

The role of the Elections and Boundaries Commission is set out in Section 88 (13) (14) of the Constitution of Belize which states:

- (13) *“The Commission shall be responsible for the direction and supervision of the registration of voters and the conduct of elections, referenda and all matters connected therewith”.*
- (14) *“In the exercise of its functions, the Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority and shall, subject to the provisions of this Constitution, act in accordance with the Representation of the People Act or any other law, rule or regulation relating to elections”.*

Also Section 90 empowers the Commission to make proposals to the National Assembly regarding boundary redistricting.

There is a Chairman and four Members. The Chairman and two members are appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister after **consultation** with the Leader of the Opposition. The other two members are appointed by the Governor General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, with the **concurrence** of the Leader of the Opposition.

The terms **consult** and **concur** empower both the Government and the Opposition to appoint members to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Two criteria for appointment to the Commission as required by the Belize Constitution in Section 88 (1) are that members must be persons of:

- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ High national standing

What is The Elections and Boundaries Department?

Electoral Management is mandated by the Representation of the People Act. Administered by a Chief Elections Officer, the Elections and Boundaries Department is responsible for the day to day electoral management on behalf of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, specifically the following sections:

- ◆ Administrative Provisions
- ◆ Elections
- ◆ Continuous Registration
- ◆ Election Rules
- ◆ Adjustment of Electoral Records on Redistricting

The Staff of the Elections and Boundaries Department are Public Officers as defined by the Belize Constitution whose conduct is governed by the Public Service Regulations and, where appropriate, the General Workers Rule. The Chief Elections Officer is also the Head of the Department.

ABOUT US - A PROFILE



Overview

The Elections and Boundaries Department is one of two Election Management Bodies in Belize. The Department was initiated in 1989 after amendments to Section 88 of the Constitution (S.I. No. 26 of 1988), and the resultant amendments to the Administrative Provisions of the Representation of the People Act (ROPA). At that time the responsibility for staffing and other administrative obligations were transferred from the Elections and Boundaries Commission to the Public Services Commission. The Chief Elections Officer was appointed by the Governor General in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister. An amendment to Section 107 of the Constitution in 2001, transferred the appointment of the Chief Elections Officer to the Public Services Commission. The Chief Elections Officer is the Head of the Department.

The primary functions of the Department are:

- ◆ Electoral Administration
- ◆ Voter Education

Electoral Administration

Some 90% of the Department's workload focuses on electoral administration. Five tasks in electoral administration are directly related to registration matters. These are:

- ◆ The maintenance of electoral registers both electronic and manual
- ◆ Registration of new electors
- ◆ Processing transfers of electors from one division to another
- ◆ Processing of changes, such as change of names and addresses within the division
- ◆ Preparing replacements of Identification Cards
- ◆ Producing new Identification Cards

Other related tasks are making corrections, ensuring quality control to maintain the integrity of the database, conducting physical investigations on the residences of the new registrants, preparing for and presenting transactions at the Monthly Revision Court, and making representations at the Annual Revision Court.

Voter Education

Voter education has been an initiative of the Department since November 1999, with the launching of a first publication entitled, “Selecting Our Leaders—Past and Present”. The primary focus of the Department is to:

- ◆ Provide the tools and support needed by personnel
- ◆ Maintain an accurate, transparent database and electoral systems
- ◆ Forge partnerships
- ◆ Share, link, network and reach out to like Organizations and Stakeholders

This is done through:

- ◆ Lectures
- ◆ Workshops
- ◆ Talk Shows
- ◆ Publications
- ◆ Maintaining Library Corners
- ◆ Maintaining website
- ◆ Disseminating information to schools, libraries , NGO’s, media, and political parties

Other Functions

Section 90 of the Belize Constitution was amended by S.I. No. 26 of 1988. The Section empowers the Elections and Boundaries Commission to make recommendations to the National Assembly on boundary redistricting. The Department’s role is to provide technical assistance to the Elections and Boundaries Commission and to adjust the electoral roll as per the ROPA after the redistricting becomes law.

Mission and Objective

The motto of the Department is: **Accuracy * Efficiency * Compliance * Credibility.** The Department is committed to the enhancement of democracy through the promotion of voter education and the maintenance of a legitimate, impartial, valid electoral process. Its goal is to encourage public participation, forge partnerships, and to provide efficient and effective service delivery. Its objectives are:

- ◆ To operate a professionalized electoral service
- ◆ To strengthen public confidence in the electoral system
- ◆ To increase the level of voter participation through voter education
- ◆ To form partnerships with stakeholders

Where Are We?

A Central Office located in Belize City is the administrative hub of the Department. Twelve Registration Offices countrywide, including two Sub-offices in Independence Village and Benque Viejo del Carmen Town, provide registration and

voter education services to the public. Since October 2000, the Department expanded voter registration services to several communities by establishing Offices within the communities as follows:

- ◆ Sub-office in Independence Village provides services for surrounding villages including:

→	Georgetown	→	Red Bank
→	Maya Mopan	→	Farm 11
→	Seine Bight	→	Bella Vista
→	Placencia	→	San Roman

- ◆ A fourth District Office for Belize District was established on New Road in Belize City. This office focuses only on the three Belize Rural Constituencies. Prior to the opening of the New Road Office, the three Belize Rural Constituencies were housed in a Belize City Office with offices for four other Constituencies.

- ◆ A District Office in Belmopan provides access to customers in the City of Belmopan and the surrounding Communities as follows:

- ◆ Along the Hummingbird Highway to St. Margaret and Armenia
- ◆ West along the Western Highway to Unitedville Village
- ◆ East along the Western Highway to Banana Bank, More Tomorrow, Cotton Tree, Saint Matthews and Franks Eddy

A Sub-office continues to be housed in the Town of Benque Viejo Del Carmen, which provides services to customers from the surrounding communities. The Department also extends services to the Town of San Pedro Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker Village by providing electoral registration on both Island Communities on a timely basis.

Selecting our Leaders Past and Present

INTRODUCTION

Why the fuss over leaders of a country?

In any organization, whether large or small, a family or household unit, a Non-governmental Organization, a Church, or a Lodge, leaders are needed to manage the smooth running of the organization. They make decisions for the betterment of the organization. The leaders also ensure that rules and regulations are adhered to, make policies where necessary and select persons to handle the day-to-day administration. In other words, the role of leaders is to **govern** their organizations.

This role is similar to that of leaders who manage the affairs of a country. They **govern** through an institution or organization called **Government**. They manage a country's affairs through the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority. Public Officers are the front-line persons responsible for carrying out the day-to-day administrative activities. Therefore, each Public Officer is a member of the organization called **Government**, whether employed as Chief Executive Officers or as Clerks.

Leaders Selected by a Few

Belize's political culture started with its first settlers, the Buccaneers, around the middle of the 17th century. Then the country's economic mainstay was based on logwood and mahogany exportation. Slave labour was utilized in the industry until its abolition around 1838. Belize was therefore governed first by the Settlers who owned the land, then the Colonial Office through the Superintendent, and later the Governor.

Those Leaders who formed the Legislative Bodies called, Meetings, Assemblies, and Councils were primarily nominated, selected, or even handpicked. Later on when the citizens were allowed to vote, only a few persons responded. The majority could not vote, could not run for office, primarily due to the stringent eligibility requirements for voting.

Election of Leadership by a Majority

It took more than 200 years or two centuries for the working class people to have a voice in the affairs of the country through their vote for leadership. This happened

in 1954, nearly 50 years ago. They endured another decade before elected leaders acquired control over some aspects of the affairs of the country through a [Ministerial System](#). Prior to then, executive and administrative decisions were directly under British scrutiny and control.

In 1978, the voting franchise was extended when the age required to register as an elector was lowered from 21 years of age, to 18 years. This further accommodated more Belizeans to be able to vote for their leaders in government. Independence of 1981 gave control to Belizeans and political leaders to fully manage the affairs of the country. Since then, five peaceful, free and fair elections have been held.

The United Democratic Party (UDP) emerged as the party to win the first election in post-independent Belize held on December 14, 1984. On March 5 2003, three elections—Town, City and General—were conducted on the same day. The People’s United Party (PUP) formed the first back-to-back government in post-independent Belize.

LEGISLATIVE BODIES—SELECTED MEMBERS

The Public Meeting

In 1765, the Settlers formed a Legislative Body called the Public Meeting to govern the affairs of the Settlement of Belize. These Settlers were the principal owners of large tracts of land, and as a result, were recognized as the privileged. The Public Meeting through its members was responsible for electing Magistrates, and exercised not only judicial, but also administrative functions over the Settlement.

In 1787, the British formally appointed a Superintendent to carry out all administrative functions. The Settlers gradually consolidated enough power to influence some administrative matters, and by 1832 the power of the Public Meeting started to wane for several reasons, including:

- ◆ The loss of economic control due to a downturn in the mahogany trade
- ◆ Magistrates were now appointed by the Superintendent and not the Public Meeting

- ◆ After the abolition of slavery in 1838, coloured men and non-whites became active in the political affairs and eventually dominated the Public meeting
- ◆ By 1840, the laws were enforced through the Superintendent
- ◆ The ethnic landscape changed and the population doubled after the Guerra De Las Casas in Yucatan around 1847. As a result, thousands of Maya and Mestizo became refugees in the North and West of Belize

The Legislative Assembly of 1853

The first formal Constitution was introduced in 1853, and the Public Meeting was abolished and replaced by the Legislative Assembly. The life of the Legislative Assembly was for four years, but the Superintendent had the authority to dissolve the Assembly at any time. The Legislative Assembly consisted of 21 members, but criteria for membership were limited to those persons with the appropriate salary and property, such as:

- ◆ Be a British subject
- ◆ Be 21 years or over
- ◆ Have a net worth of at least £400
- ◆ Own real property with minimum value of £7
- ◆ Receive a salary of £100 per year

The qualification to vote was similarly as stringent. The Settlement continued to be governed by a Superintendent and a Legislative Assembly until 1871.

The Legislative Council of 1871

The Legislative Assembly was replaced by the Legislative Council. In 1871 Belize became a Crown Colony. The Superintendent became the first Lieutenant Governor, and formally represented the British Government. The Governor exercised both executive and legislative powers, and presided over the Council meetings. All members of the Legislative Council were nominated and consisted of:

- ◆ Four official members who were employees of the Crown
- ◆ Four unofficial members

The unofficial members invariably represented the business interests such as the landed Settlers and the Merchants who exercised total control both politically and economically. Among other constitutional amendments, several factors changed the structure of the Legislative Council during the period 1890 to 1931. The local elites also clamoured for a return to elections, and the labouring classes openly showed their dissatisfaction to the status quo. Several issues of political interest also surfaced, including:

- ◆ Belize became a municipality called Town of Belize in 1911 as per Ordinance No. 18 of 1911

- ◆ Race riot in Belize City in July of 1919, sparked off by disbanded soldiers who were subjected to racist treatment as members of the British West Indian Regiment in World War I
- ◆ In February 1934 the Unemployment Brigade marched in protest through the streets of the Town of Belize
- ◆ In March 1934 the Labour and Unemployment Association led by Antonio Soberanis was formed to protest the conditions of the working class countrywide

The new municipality called the Town of Belize was situated two miles from the Court House.

By 1931, membership in the New Legislative Council had increased from eight to thirteen and included five elected members. The membership comprised:

- ◆ The Governor
- ◆ Five official members who were employees of the Crown
- ◆ Two nominated members
- ◆ Five elected members

The number of the elected members increased to six in 1938, and by 1945 the composition of the Council had changed to :

- ◆ Three official members who were employees of the Crown
- ◆ Four nominated members
- ◆ Six elected members

Table 1
Registered Electors by Election Year

Election Year	Population	Registered Electors	% of Reg. Voters
1936	56,071	1,035	1.8
1939	58,759	1,155	2.0
1942	61,723	1,383	2.1
1945	64,327	822	1.3
1948	63,139	1,772	2.8

Source: Assad Shoman. "Party Politics in Belize –1950-1986"; Cubola Prod. 1987

As demonstrated in Table 1, only a small percentage registered to vote between 1936 and 1948, due to the rigid eligibility criteria to register as an elector. The small number of registered electors, was a reflection that the **qualifications** and **disqualifications** for registering electors had not changed much. Most particularly, the literacy and financial requirements made it impossible for a large percentage of the population to vote.

Qualifications

- ◆ Has attained the age of 21 years
- ◆ Is under no legal incapacity
- ◆ Is a British subject by birth or naturalization; OR
- ◆ Has resided in Belize for a period not less than three years; AND
- ◆ Possess one of the following qualifications:
 - ◆ Property tax valued at not less than \$6.00 per annum
 - ◆ Rental value of premises occupied is not less \$96.00 per annum
 - ◆ Receive Annual salary of \$300.00 or more
 - ◆ Reside in Belize at least 12 months before registering as a voter
 - ◆ Reside in the same premises at least six months before registering as a voter

Disqualifications

- ◆ Cannot read or write the English language
- ◆ Has received relief from public or municipal funds, within three months previous to registration
- ◆ Is an undischarged bankrupt
- ◆ Has been sentenced in any part of His Majesty's dominions to death; OR
 - ◆ Penal servitude; OR
 - ◆ Imprisonment with hard labour for any term exceeding twelve months
- ◆ Receive a free pardon from His Majesty

ELECTIONS UNDER ADULT SUFFRAGE

With the emergence of political parties, the People's United Party (PUP) in 1950, and the National Party (NP) in 1952, the first national election took place on Wednesday, April 28, 1954. Through the agitation of the PUP and members of the General Workers Union (GWU), the Constitution was amended to allow for Universal Adult Suffrage in 1951. This came into effect in time for the elections in 1954, and meant that all adults 21 years and over, had the right to vote in the 1954 election.

Gone were the qualifying factors based on land ownership and/or financial earnings. **Adult Suffrage** meant that **working class persons**, the **rank and file**, were able to vote for the very first time. Nine members were elected on Wednesday, April 28, 1954 and for the first time elected members formed the majority in the Legislative Council.

The Legislative Council was presided over by a Speaker nominated by the Governor, and its membership included:

- ◆ Three nominated members
- ◆ Three official members who were employees of the Crown
- ◆ **Nine elected members**

Provisions were made for an Executive Council to be chaired by the Governor, and whose membership consisted of:

- ◆ **Four elected members**
- ◆ Four official members who were employees of the Crown
- ◆ Two nominated members

Some 20,801 electors voted in the 1954 elections representing 70.5% of the total electorate. The number of electors, as well as voter turnout, painted the mood of the times relative to 1948. A coalition of PUP and the GWU, walked away with eight out of nine seats, while the ninth Mr. Charles Westby, represented the National Party. For the first time Elected Leaders formed the majority in the Legislature, but still the minority in the Executive Council.

The nine leaders elected under **Adult Suffrage** by a majority of the people were:

- 1 George C. Price Belize North
- 2 Phillip S.W. Goldson Belize South

3	Herman Jex	Belize Rural
4	Leigh I. A. Richardson	Belize West
5	Enrique De Paz	Cayo
6	Nathaniel Cacho	Stann Creek
7	Charles Westby	Toledo
8	George Flowers	Orange Walk
9	Jose Leon Chang	Corozal

One year later in 1955, the *Quasi Ministerial System* was introduced. George Cadle Price became Associate Member for Natural Resources, and three other elected leaders became Members.

Members of Quasi Ministerial System

George Cadle Price

Associate member for Natural Resources

Leigh I. A. Richardson

Member for Natural Resources

Phillip S.W. Goldson

Member for Social Service

Herman Jex

Member for Public Utilities

ELECTIONS AFTER ADULT SUFFRAGE A NEW CONSTITUTION

The Legislative Assembly

In 1959, Sir Hilary Blood was appointed by the British Government to assess the existing Constitution and make recommendations based on his findings. With the influence of the political and social climate, and augmented by Blood's report, local autonomy increased.

- ◆ The Full Ministerial system was introduced.
 - ◆ The Office of **First Minister** was created
 - ◆ A Cabinet of Ministers was created

- ◆ The role of political parties was given constitutional validity.
 - ◆ The appointment of two out of five members was on the advice of the **First Minister**
 - ◆ The appointment of a third was on the advice of the Opposition Party Leader

There was a Legislative Assembly with 25 members, 18 of whom were elected, and comprised of:

- ◆ Five nominated members
- ◆ Two ex-officio members
- ◆ **Eighteen elected members**

The composition of the **Executive Council** also changed, to include:

- ◆ **Five elected members**
- ◆ One nominated member
- ◆ Two ex-officio members

The Legislative Assembly was presided over by a Speaker, nominated by the Governor. The **Executive Council** was still chaired by the Governor, but was a non-voting position. For the first time the people's representatives were the majority on the **Executive Council**.

The new Constitution came into effect after the 1961 national elections on Wednesday, March 26. Some 47 persons representing three political parties offered

themselves as candidates. The PUP won all 18 seats, and Hon. George Cadle Price became **First Minister**.

Self Government—The National Assembly

In 1963 Belize gained full internal self-government, the final formal step before independence. One significance of self-government was that responsibility for certain affairs of the country was in the control of the Elected Leaders. However, the Governor was still in charge of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Internal Security and Civil Service.

The 1963 Constitution formed the National Assembly, which consisted of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The National Assembly was referred to as the Legislature because it was the body that made laws. Bills were oftentimes introduced in the House of Representatives and sent to the Senate for confirmation. The members of the House of Representatives were the Elected Leaders, and The House was presided over by a Speaker.

The Senate was presided over by a president who was appointed from among the members or outside of the membership. There were a total of 8 appointed members—five on the advice of the **Premier**, two on the advice of the Opposition Leader, and one on the advice of the Belize Advisory Council. The Cabinet was the policy-making arm of the government headed by the **Premier**, the Hon George Cadle Price. All members of Cabinet were drawn from the National Assembly.

Amendments to the ordinance in 1978 were of great importance in our election history for two main reasons.

- ◆ A new registration system introduced the Voter Identification Card
- ◆ Eligibility to register as elector extended to 18 year olds

The Election and Boundaries Commission also became a reality. The first general election under these new changes was held on November 21, 1979. Some 44,990 voters representing 89.9% of the total electorate turned out to vote. The UDP gained 5 seats, while the PUP garnered 13 seats to form the government. Hon. George Cadle Price continued to lead the government as the Premier of British Honduras.

ELECTIONS IN POST-INDEPENDENT BELIZE



After nearly 200 years of British rule, September 21, 1981 heralded the independence of Belize. There was a new Constitution in the horizon, a Belize Constitution. Belize attained independence under the leadership of Premier, Hon. George Cadle Price, who became Belize's first Prime Minister. A Belizean Government was now responsible for both the internal and external affairs of the country. In the system of government full independence also meant that a Governor General represents the Queen of England as Head of State in Belize.

The Belize Constitution, which was passed on September 20, 1981, is the supreme law of Belize. It calls for a National Assembly consisting of the House of Representative and the Senate. Members of the House of Representative are all elected. The number of the members increased to 28 in 1984 by Act No. 16 and later to 29 in 1993. The Prime Minister chairs the Cabinet.

The first election after independence was held on December 14, 1984. Some 64,441 electors were registered and 49,311 electors representing 74.9% of total electors went to the polls. The United Democratic Party won the first election after independence, and formed the government under Prime Minister Hon. Manuel Esquivel. Four other general elections have been conducted since then, the last being March 5, 2003. The victorious party was the People's United Party, who have won three out of the five elections in post-independent Belize.

To date, Belize has seen three Prime Ministers:

Hon. George Cadle Price	1981 - 1984	★	1989 - 1993
Hon. Manuel Esquivel	1984 - 1989	★	1993 - 1998
Hon. Said Musa	1998 - 2003	★	2003 - present

The Who and How of Government

THE BELIZE CONSTITUTION



There are laws in every country to guide leaders to govern. The basis for these laws and the supreme law of the land is the Belize Constitution. The Belize Constitution came into being at Belize's Independence on September 21, 1981. The Constitution has been amended several times—the first amendment in 1988 and the last in 2001. It contains 12 Parts or Chapters, among other things:

- 1 **Defines the State, Belize and the basis for Citizenship**
- 2 **States that the Constitution is the Supreme Law**
- 3 **Lists the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, such as protection of or from**
 - ★ Right to life
 - ★ Right to personal liberty
 - ★ Law
 - ★ Inhuman treatment
 - ★ Slavery and forced labour
 - ★ Arbitrary search and entry
 - ★ Freedom of movement
 - ★ Freedom of expression
 - ★ Right of privacy
 - ★ Freedom of conscience
- 4 **Identifies the role of the:**
 - ★ Governor-General
 - ★ Executive
 - ★ The Legislature
 - ★ Judiciary
 - ★ Public Services Commission
 - ★ Security Services Commission
 - ★ Judicial and Legal Commission
 - ★ Elections and Boundaries Commission
- 5 **Miscellaneous sections include:**
 - ★ Provisions for National Symbols
 - ★ Code of Conduct for Members of Commissions and Public Officers

WHAT IS AND WHO FORMS A GOVERNMENT?



The words **govern** and **governance** mean:

- ⇒ **To guide**
- ⇒ **To direct**
- ⇒ **To manage**

Generally it is to legislate the affairs and policies of a country through a body or organization called **Government**.

There are several arms or branches of Government, namely:

1. **The Legislative**
2. **The Executive**
3. **The Judicial**

1. The Legislative Branch/Arm

This is the National Assembly and comprises of two houses or two chambers called bi-cameral. The two houses or chambers are:

- ◆ The House of Representatives
- ◆ The Senate

a) *The House of Representatives*

There are 29 members in the House of Representatives. Each is elected by the people to represent them at General Elections held at intervals of five years. The Meetings of the House are presided over by a Speaker who is elected by members of the House. If the Speaker is not an elected member of the House, he/she then becomes a member but cannot vote. The Speaker is responsible for the smooth running of the meetings of the House of Representatives.

The functions of the House of Representatives include:

- ◆ Introducing new laws by passing Bills or proposed Laws in the House
- ◆ Proposing and debating the annual budget
- ◆ Proposing and debating administrative policies

b) The Senate

The Senate consists of twelve members referred to as Senators. Each member is appointed by the Governor General with the advice of different persons and/or organization as follows:

- ◆ Six members with the advice of the Prime Minister
- ◆ Three members with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition
- ◆ One member with the advice of the Belize Council of Churches and Evangelical Association of Churches
- ◆ One member with the advice of the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Belize Business Bureau
- ◆ One member with the advice of the National Trade Union Congress and the Civil Society Steering Committee

The President of the Senate presides over the meetings of the Senate, and is elected from among the membership or nominated from outside the Senate. Presently, the Senate comprises twelve members and one President.

Besides debating and confirming Bills passed by the House of Representatives, the Senate has other functions, including :

- ◆ Authorising the ratification of any treaty by the Government of Belize, including any treaty for the final settlement of the territorial dispute between Belize and the Republic of Guatemala
- ◆ Approving the establishment in Belize of any new military base of operations for any foreign military forces after the 15th day of January 2002
- ◆ Approving the appointment of an Ambassador, a High Commissioner, the Chief Justice, a Justice of the Supreme Court, a Justice of the Court of Appeal, the Contractor General and the Ombudsman

2. The Executive Branch/Arm

The Executive Branch of government consists of the Governor General, the Prime Minister and The Cabinet. There are also other Agencies of Government such as the Public Service and the Local Government Bodies.

a) The Governor General

The executive authority of Belize is vested in the Queen as the head of state, who appoints a Governor General to represent her in Belize. One executive duty of the Governor General is the appointment of important positions in government, such as:

- ◆ The appointment of the Prime Minister
- ◆ The appointment of Ministers of Government and Members of the Services Commissions on the advice of the Prime Minister

b) The Prime Minister and The Cabinet

The Prime Minister is appointed by the Governor-General from among members of the House of Representatives. It is the Leader of the Political Party which commands

the support of the majority of the members of the House who becomes the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government and therefore heads the Cabinet.

The Cabinet is the chief policy-making body in the government machinery. The members of Cabinet are drawn from the National Assembly which comprises of two houses namely:

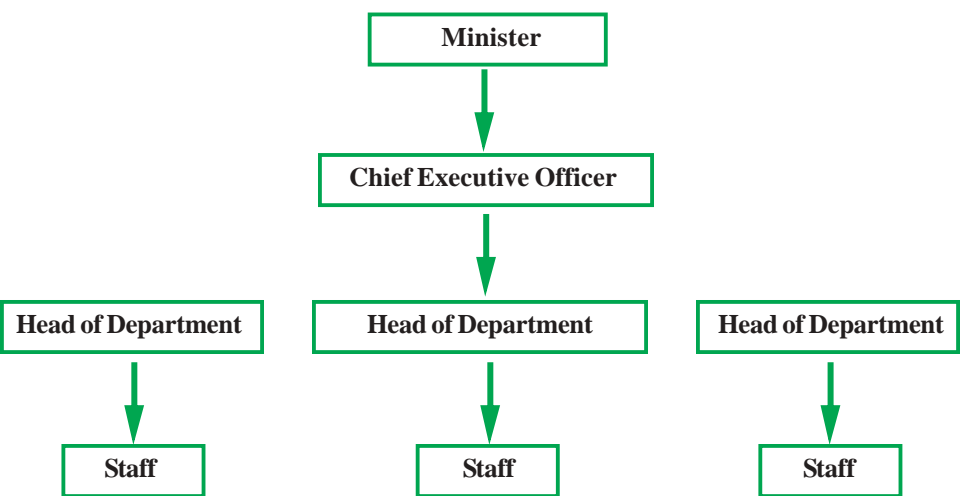
- ◆ The Senate
- ◆ The House of Representatives

The Prime Minister submits a list of names to be so appointed, to the Governor-General. The Governor-General then appoints the persons, who are charged with various Ministries as Ministers of Government.

c) *The Public Service*

Each Ministry is divided into Departments and is staffed by Public Officers. Public Officers are responsible for the day-to day administration of policies made by Cabinet. Some Public Officers are appointed to the Public Service by the Office of the Public Services Commission or the Security Services Commission, or the Judicial and Legal Services Commission. The Chairman of the Public Services Commission is a member of the other two Commissions. Each Ministry is supervised by a Chief Executive Officer. Chief Executive Officers have, since 2001, been responsible to appoint junior Public Officers up to Payscale 9.

The Hierarchy of the Public Service



d) *Local Government Bodies*

Local Government Bodies consist of:

- ◆ Alcalde System in Toledo District
- ◆ Village Councils
- ◆ Town Councils
- ◆ City Councils

3. The Judicial Branch

a) *The Magistrate's Court*

Belize is divided into six judicial districts over which Magistrates preside. There is a Magistrate's Court in every district town and the two cities of Belmopan and Belize. Each Court is presided over by a Magistrate and in Belize City by the Chief Magistrate, who is assisted by eight other Magistrates. Magistrates' Courts have jurisdiction to hear and determine complaints or information for summary conviction offences; and to inquire into charges of indictable offences. Magistrates have wide powers under the Summary Jurisdiction Act to impose fines or imprisonment and to grant bail. The Judicial and Legal Services Commission appoints Magistrates and deals with other conditions of their service.

b) *The Supreme Court*

The Supreme Court of Judicature is a Superior Court which has jurisdiction as follows:

- ♦ **Original Jurisdiction**, for example, in matrimonial and constitutional matters
- ♦ **Appellate Jurisdiction**, for example, appeals from Inferior Courts.

The Supreme Court is made up of the Chief Justice and other Justices. The Chief Justice is appointed by the Governor-General acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. The other Justices are appointed by the Governor-General acting in accordance with the advice of the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, and with the concurrence of the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. There are also provisions relating to the qualifications of Justices of the Supreme Court as well as their removal.

c) *The Court of Appeal*

The Court of Appeal is a Superior Court. It has jurisdiction to hear and determine Appeals from Inferior Courts in civil and criminal matters. The Judges of the Court of Appeal consist of a President and other Judges. They are appointed by the Governor-General acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. There are also provisions governing the qualifications and removal of Judges of the Court of Appeal.

d) *The Privy Council*

The Privy Council is the final Court of Appeal in the hierarchy of the Courts. Appeals are placed before the Privy Council from the Court of Appeal, after decisions in cases involving any civil, criminal or other proceedings pertaining to the interpretation of the Constitution.

Also, Appeals are placed before the Privy Council from decisions of the Court of Appeal with leave of the latter (Court of Appeal), in certain cases such as, decisions in civil proceedings where the matter involved is one of general or public importance.

The Voting Process



TYPES OF ELECTIONS

The Representation of The People Act, Chapter 9, sets the guidelines for the Election Process for three types of elections:

- ◆ General
 - ◆ Municipal
 - ◆ Referendum

General Elections are held at intervals of 5 years, while Municipal Elections are held every 3 years on the first Wednesday in March. There are three reasons to call a Referendum as explained in the section entitled, “The Referendum Act”.

WHO CONDUCTS ELECTIONS

The Chief Elections Officer monitors the conduct of elections before, during and after the Polls. It is the Election Officers who conduct and manage elections on election day. All Election Officers are Public Officers who are appointed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission through the Chief Elections Officer. An Election Officer must take an Oath of Office. Election Officers are:

- ◆ Returning Officers
 - ◆ Election Clerks
 - ◆ Presiding Officers
 - ◆ Poll Clerks
 - ◆ Counting Clerks

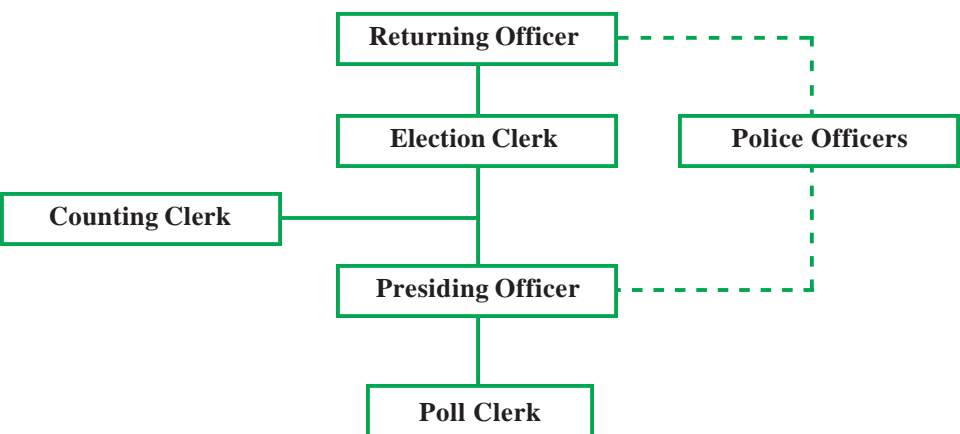
RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELECTION OFFICERS



General

The **Returning Officer** is the Chief Administrator in the conduct of elections. He/she is responsible to supervise all officers. The **Election Clerk** is the assistant to the **Returning Officer** and can be called upon to perform the duties of the **Returning Officer** should the need arise. The **Presiding Officer** maintains full control of the Polling Station and is assisted by **Poll Clerks**. The **Counting Clerk** counts the votes under the guidance of the **Returning Officer**. The **Returning Officer** does not supervise **Police Officers**, but the **Returning Officer** and the **Presiding Officer** may request the assistance of the Police to maintain law and order and to observe the 100 yards line.

THE HIERARCHY



Returning Officer

A Returning Officer is assigned to a Constituency or Electoral Division for General Elections and to a Town or City for Municipal Elections. The responsibilities of each Returning Officer are:

- ◆ Overall Management of the election procedure
- ◆ Distribution of election supplies to Presiding Officers and other Election Officers

- ◆ Accepting proxies for Municipal Elections, and maintaining a Proxy Roster
- ◆ Supervision of the counting process
- ◆ Reporting of final results to the Chief Elections Officer
- ◆ Presenting certification of final results to the Chief Elections Officer

The work of the Returning Officer starts immediately with his appointment. He works closely with the Elections and Boundaries Department from the time of his appointment to the announcement of the election results. The first formal assignment is the receipt of nominations from prospective Candidates.

The Returning Officer coordinates the work of Election Workers, and ensures a state of preparedness. Before polling, the Returning Officer visits each Polling Station accompanied by Presiding Officers to ensure that the Stations are secure and that the environment both inside and outside is adequate for voting.

On Election Day, the Returning Officer visits each Polling Station in his jurisdiction at intervals during Polling Day, to ensure that all is well. He consults with the Presiding Officer, offers advice and solves problems when necessary. After the close of polls, the Returning Officer supervises the counting of votes and announces the results.

Election Clerk

The Election Clerk is to assist the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer can assign any election duty to his Election Clerk before and during the day of election.

The Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer is responsible for the supervision of the taking of the poll in the Polling Station on election day and ensures that the Polling Station functions efficiently and effectively. Other responsibilities of the Presiding Officer are to:

- ◆ Collect all supplies for use in the Polling Station prior to Election Day
- ◆ Inspect the Polling Station and arrange the Station to facilitate orderly voting
- ◆ Inspect and open all ballot boxes in the presence of Candidates and/or Polling Agents to ensure that boxes are empty prior to the opening of polls
- ◆ Make the required entries in the station diary
- ◆ Declare the Polling Station open for voting
- ◆ Regulate the number of Electors within the Polling Station
- ◆ **Initial each** ballot paper before issuing to the Elector
- ◆ Ensure that the Elector's right forefinger is dipped in indelible ink, to at least the first joint
- ◆ Mark the register to indicate that the Elector has voted
- ◆ Cancel and initial spoiled ballot papers by marking "**Cancelled**" across them
- ◆ Ensure that **only** authorized persons are allowed inside the Polling Station
- ◆ Resolve any problems inside the Polling Station in an amicable manner

- ◆ Assist incapacitated Electors, in the presence of Polling Agents
- ◆ At the close of polls, seal the ballot boxes in the presence of Polling Agents
- ◆ Escort ballot boxes to the Counting Station and deliver to the Returning Officer

Poll Clerk

The Poll Clerk assists the Presiding Officer. He/she is required to inspect the Voter Identification Card of every Elector entering the Polling Station, to ensure that the name is on the List of Electors or in the Electoral Binder. He sends the Elector to the Presiding Officer for a ballot paper. The Poll Clerk assists with the process of sealing all documents and ballot boxes at the close of polls at 6:00 p.m. The main functions of the Poll Clerk are to:

- ◆ Assist in monitoring the smooth flow of Electors inside the Polling Station
- ◆ Inspect the Voter's Identification Card
- ◆ Call the name of the Elector in an audible voice
- ◆ Ensure that the name appears on the List of Electors
- ◆ Mark a line with ink over the name of the Elector on the List of Electors to indicate that the Elector has voted
- ◆ Assist the Elector to dip his/her right forefinger in indelible ink, up to the first joint
- ◆ Observe that the Elector deposits the ballot paper inside the ballot box

Counting Clerk

The Counting Clerk works in the Counting Station. He/she assists in the reconciliation and counting of votes under the supervision of the Returning Officer.

Polling Agents and Candidates—Other Stakeholders

Polling Agents are representatives of Candidates. They are officially designated to witness the polling and counting processes on behalf of their Candidates at specific Polling and Counting Stations. Each Candidate may appoint Polling Agents to attend at each Polling and Counting Station in a Constituency or Municipality being contested. Appointment of a Polling Agent is made in writing to the Returning Officer, indicating the name and address of the appointee and signed by the Candidate. Application forms are available from Returning Officers and the offices of the Elections and Boundaries Department countrywide.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Each candidate deposits the following amounts with the Government Treasury before Nomination Day:

- ◆ \$200.00 for General Election
- ◆ \$25.00 for Municipal Election in each Town
- ◆ \$50.00 for Municipal Elections in each of the two Cities

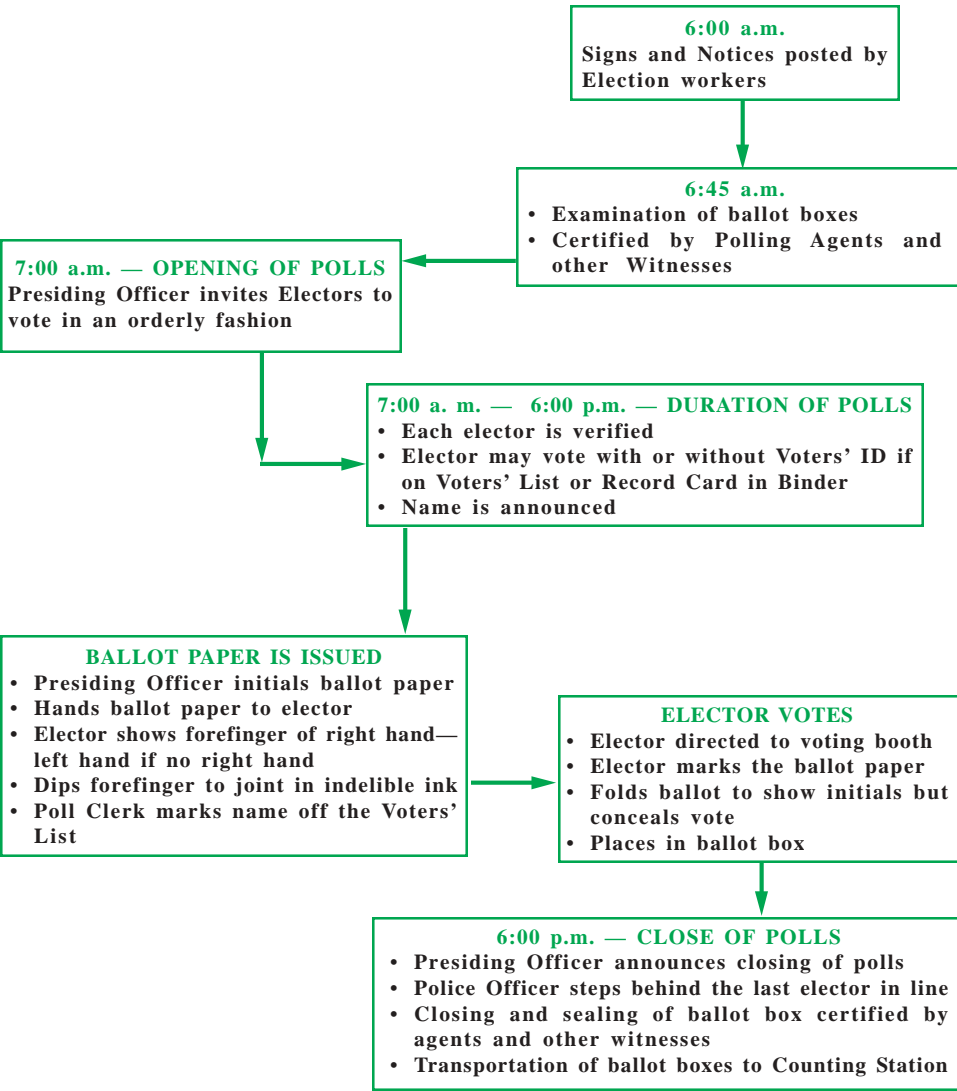
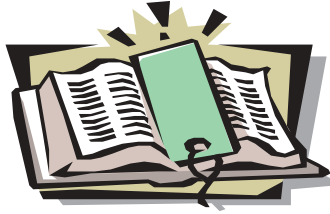
The original receipt issued by the Government Treasury is to be shown to the Returning Officer on Nomination Day.

The Returning Officer receives nominations from all candidates at designated Nomination Stations during the following times:

- ⌚ General Elections from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- ⌚ Municipal Elections
 - For Towns from 11:00 a. m. to 12:00 noon
 - For Cities 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Returning Officer gives the nomination paper to the persons being nominated. For **General Elections** six persons whose names appear on the Voters' List sign the nomination form as witnesses for each Candidate. The Candidate assents to the nomination by signing on the nomination form. If at 4:00 p.m. only one Candidate has been nominated for the seat to be filled, the Returning Officer declares that Candidate to have been elected. He certifies by endorsing the return of that Candidate on Form 20 and returns the writ to the Chief Elections Officer for transmission to the Governor General. For **Municipal Elections** two persons whose names appear on the Voters' List sign the nomination form as witnesses to a Candidate. The Candidate assents to the nomination by signing on the nomination form.

VOTING PROCEDURE



Who Can Vote?

Only registered Electors can vote in a Referendum, Municipal or General Election. An Elector can vote **with** or **without** a Voters' Identification Card if his/her name appears on the Voters' List **and/or** has a Record Card in the binder.

An Elector is **not** on the Voters' List but **has** a record card in the Binder
He/she is to be allowed to vote.

An Elector **has** an Identification Card, but is **neither** on the Voters' List **nor** in the Binder
*He/she is **not** to be allowed to vote.*

The Elector may be refused a ballot paper if he/she does not comply with the staining of the forefinger of the right hand or the left hand, if there is no right.

OTHER RULES



Questions which may be put to the Voter

Any Candidate or Polling Agent may challenge the identity of an Elector. If the Elector's identity is called into question, the Presiding Officer has the right to ask questions of the Elector relating to age and place of residence, for example:

1. Are you the same person whose name appears on this Voters' List?
2. Have you voted in this election?

The Presiding Officer may ask the above questions of any Elector at the time of voting, when requested to do so by the Candidate or Polling Agent.

Spoilt Ballot

Should an Elector spoil his ballot paper, the Presiding Officer is to issue another after retrieving, cancelling and recording the initial ballot paper. The Elector delivers the spoilt ballot paper to the Presiding Officer who issues another ballot paper to the Elector. The Presiding Officer cancels the spoilt ballot paper by writing the word **Cancelled** across the face of the ballot. The Presiding Officer initials and retains the cancelled ballot paper and records the occurrence in the Polling Station Diary.

Sealing of Ballot Boxes and Envelopes

At the close of polls, the Presiding Officer seals the following in the presence of Polling Agents and other witnesses:

- Ballot boxes, to prevent the introduction of additional ballot papers
- Keys for ballot boxes used at the poll
- Unused and spoilt ballot papers
- Marked copies of the Voters' List

Transportation of Ballot Boxes

Each Presiding Officer, accompanied by Police Officers, transports the ballot boxes and parcels to the Returning Officer of the constituency or municipality.

PROXY VOTER

Rules of Proxy

Proxy is an Elector who is authorized to vote for another Elector. This vote is called a Proxy vote. The Elector identifies the person and makes an application to appoint the person as a Proxy. To be a Proxy, the person **must** be qualified to vote.

Only the following persons can appoint proxies:

- ◆ Members of the Belize Police Department
- ◆ Members of Belize Defence Force
- ◆ Persons appointed as Election Officers and working on Election Day
- ◆ Staff members of the Embassies of Belize, living abroad

Applications and appointments are to be made on specified forms to the Chief Elections Officer for General Elections and to Returning Officers for Municipal Elections. An Elector is **not** entitled to appoint more than one Proxy at a time. In other words, a person can only be appointed once, as a Proxy. The application is to be signed by a Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of Police, Commandant of the Belize Defence Force, Notary Public or Honorary Consul.

The Chief Elections Officer and Returning Officer are to maintain a Proxy Roster to be submitted to each Presiding Officer. The Proxy does not dip his forefinger but presents the Proxy Paper as proof.

COUNTING RULES



Recount

The Candidate or his Agent may request:

- a) Recounting of ballot papers
- b) Rechecking of figures recorded by the Counting Clerk or the Returning Officer

The Returning Officer may refuse the request if he believes that it is **not** reasonable. The Returning Officer may request a recount if he questions the accuracy of the count, or may recheck the figures recorded by the Counting Clerks.

Rejected Ballot Papers

The Returning Officer is to declare "**Rejected**" **void and not count** a ballot paper if:

- ◆ The ballot paper does not have the Presiding Officer's initials on the back
- ◆ The Elector has voted for more candidates than there are seats
- ◆ The ballot paper is not marked for any candidate
- ◆ The ballot paper contains any mark or writing that could identify the Elector
- ◆ The ballot paper is unmarked or void for uncertainty

If any of the above occurs on a ballot paper, the Returning Officer marks **Rejected** on it.

Rejected Objected To is marked on the ballot paper by the Returning Officer if **an objection** is made to his decision by any Political Agent who is entitled to be present.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Why Register to Vote?

Political leaders are responsible to make rules and policies and to enforce such for the smooth management of the country. Political leaders are elected at formal elections as follows:

- ❖ General or National Elections—intervals of 5 years
- ❖ Municipal or Town and City Council Elections—every 3 years on the first Wednesday in March
- ❖ Referendum—See Section on Referendum Act in this Book

There are 29 electoral divisions, 7 towns, 2 cities, and 191 villages and communities. Only **REGISTERED VOTERS** have the right to elect Political Leaders at the National and Municipal levels.

Laws Pertaining to Voter Registration

The Representation of The People Act, Chapter 9 of the Laws of Belize sets the guidelines for Voter Registration.

Who is Eligible to Register?

Every person who is:

- ① 18 years or over
- ② A citizen of:
 - ❖ Belize
 - ❖ Any Commonwealth Country who has resided in Belize for not less than 12 months
 - ❖ Any Commonwealth Country who is domiciled in Belize; and
- ③ Resident in the electoral division not less than 2 months

Where to Register?

There are twelve Registration Offices countrywide, which are staffed by Registration Officers.

How Do You become Registered?

The process of registration is *continuous*, and is conducted during normal working hours. The process for a month is closed on the 10th in order to prepare the Temporary or Supplementary List for the 15th as required by law (ROPA). Therefore, the monthly cycle for registration is from the 11th of one month to the 10th of the other. For example, for the month of August, the cycle is the 11th of July to the 10th of August.

- ✎ *If a person applies on or before the 10th of August, the process will be completed with the **August Revision Court** at the end of August.*
- ✎ *If a person applies on the 11th of August or later, the process will be completed with the **September Revision Court** at the end of September.*

A Revised List is posted in all Registration Offices on or before the 5th of the month or immediately after Revision Court. The practice is to include *all* transactions pertaining to registration, on the Supplementary and Revised Lists. The Lists are shared with every political party which is represented in the House of Representatives.

The registration process starts with the application to register as follows:

1. Make a personal application:

- a. Take proof of eligibility to the Registration Office in your area
 - ❖ Birth Certificate, OR
 - ❖ Passport, OR
 - ❖ Naturalization Certificate
- b. Fill out and sign an Application Form and Record Card
- c. A photograph is taken by the Registering Officer for the Voter ID and the Record Cards
 - ★ *The Registering Officer may request a photocopy of the documents in (a) above. This is purely administrative, to be used for future reference.* ★

2. An investigation is carried out by the Registering Officer to verify residence

- ★ *If information on the application is not accurate, the Applicant is disallowed by the Registering Officer. The name of the Applicant so disallowed will **not** be placed on the Supplementary List. The disallowed Applicant is informed by mail on Form #7 before the 15th of the month. It is an offence to give false information for the purpose of registering as an Elector.* ★

3. A temporary list of Applicants called Supplementary List is prepared by the Registering Officer for public scrutiny from 15th to the 25th of the month

These are posted at all Registration Offices.

- ★ *During the 15th to 25th any Elector can object, with basis, to Applicants on the Supplementary List* ★

4. The Magistrate in a Revision Court approves the Supplementary List at the end of every month.

★ *Each Registering Officer presents the Supplementary Lists to the Magistrate* ★

5. A Revised List is prepared.

- ❖ *Only those on the Revised Lists become Registered Electors*
- ❖ *The Revision Court is the sole authority to decide who will remain on the Revised Lists*
- ❖ *If there are no disqualifications at (4) above then all the names appear on the Revised Lists*
- ❖ *If there are disqualifications, then those names that are so disqualified, are not allowed on the Revised Lists*

6. ID Cards are issued to those on the Revised List approximately one week after the Revision Court.

★ *I.D. Cards are to be picked up personally by law (ROPA)* ★

On Objections

The law (ROPA) empowers Electors to object to:

- ❖ New Applicants who are not qualified to become Electors
- ❖ Current or Continued Electors who are not qualified to remain as Electors on the List of Electors

Monthly Objections

The monthly Supplementary Lists are posted for public scrutiny from the 15th to the 25th of the month in each District Office and other public places. Hence the requirement of a closing date, the 10th, to investigate New Applicants and prepare the Supplementary List for the 15th.

The 15th to the 25th is the **Objection Period**, whereby any Elector can **object**, with basis, to New Applicants for that month. This is done on a prescribed Form, #14A, giving grounds for objections.

Annual Objections

The **Objection Period** is for 1 (one) month each year from October 1st to November 1st and is done on the prescribed Form #14A, giving grounds for objections.

Objections to Current or Continued Registrants

On or before the 10th day of February, May, June, July, August any Elector can **object**, with basis, to Current or Continued Electors on the prescribed Form #14A, giving grounds for objections.

Process for Objections

- a) The prescribed Form #14A is filled out by the Objector with the following information:
 - ★ Name and address of person objected to
 - ★ Name and address of Objector
 - ★ Grounds for objection
- b) The Form #14A is returned to the Registering Officer of the specific Constituency or Division on or before the 25th of the month for monthly objections.
- c) The law (ROPA) mandates that each Registering Officer must publish the information in (a), giving time and date of the Revision Court through:
 - ★ one Newspaper
 - ★ the Gazette
- d) The Chief Justice's ruling in Appeal #11 of 2002 requires that the person objected to, be informed by way of a registered letter and not through Political Agents.

The law (ROPA) refers to dates of the month and not working days.

If the date falls on a Saturday as on October 25, 2002:

- ★ *The first working day to commence the objection process referred to in (a) to (d) above, would be, Monday, October 27, 2002.* ★

Do Electors Use Their Right to Object?

Although conducted every month, in practice objections are usually lodged during the election season.

The Revision Court

The Revision Court provides for legal reviews of **New Applicants** and **Current or Continued Electors**. The Revision Court is the **sole arbiter** and **authority** on who makes the list of Electors as in the case of a New Applicant, or who remains on the list of Electors as in the case of Current or Continued Electors. The legal review is held at each Magistrate's Court in all five District Towns and in the Cities of Belize and Belmopan. The Revision Court is presided over by a Magistrate, and as required by law (ROPA) conducted at the end of each month. The date is administratively set by Registering Officers and/or Chief Elections Officer in conjunction with the Magistrate responsible for the particular District. The Court has until the 5th day of the following month to complete its determination on all matters.

There are 3 (three) periods or types of Revision as required by law (ROPA). In setting the date for Revision, time must be allotted for the entire Objection Process.

- ❶ A Monthly Revision is conducted to review all New Applicants on the Supplementary List, resulting in a Revised List of Electors.

- ② An Annual Revision takes place in November to review the status of Continued Registration resulting in an Annual Divisional List of Electors. Annual Revision is conducted on or before November 20, after the close of the Objection Period on November 1st.
- ③ February, May, June, July and August are also months when Current or Continued registration is reviewed for the removal of electors who are not qualified to remain on the List of Electors. (Refer to “Qualification” and “Disqualification” of Electors)

What Activities are Transacted?

Several activities pertaining to registration are transacted. Some activities are transacted throughout the year, while others are conducted during specific times of the year as required by law (ROPA).

1. Daily transactions:

- ★ Registration of new Electors
- ★ Change of name
- ★ Change of address within the Division
- ★ Replacement I.D Cards
- ★ Rectification of errors

2. Transactions at specific times:

- ★ **July and August**
Change of address outside of the Division called Transfer
- ★ **October and November**
Annual Revision of Electoral Lists
- ★ **February, May, June, July, August**
Removal of deceased and disqualified electors

Dealing with Disqualifications

An elector can be disqualified if at the time of registration the elector was:

- ◆ Less than 18 years
- ◆ Serving a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months
- ◆ Under a sentence of death
- ◆ Certified insane
- ◆ Registered more than once

Disqualifications take place:

1. During the months of **February, May, June, July, August**
2. During Annual Revision in **October**
3. In the case of double registration, **after 14 days notice** to the Elector

Other Relevant Laws

THE REFERENDUM ACT



What are the Laws Governing the Referendum Act?

The Referendum Act No. 2 of 1999 was signed on February 25, 1999 to provide rules for the conduct of a referendum.

Why a Referendum?

Three reasons for the conduct of a Referendum in Belize are:

1. Concerns of “sufficient” national importance
2. Change to Chapter II of the Belize Constitution which affects the guaranteed fundamental rights and freedom
3. Any proposed settlement with Guatemala for resolving the Belize/Guatemala dispute

How?

- ◆ The National Assembly passes a resolution in the case of (2) and (3) above,
OR
- ◆ Request made by the Prime Minister where a law provides for holding of a Referendum on a specific issue
- ◆ Within 30 days of making the request or the passing of a resolution, the Governor General is to issue a Writ of Referendum
- ◆ Date for holding of the Referendum to be not less than 30 days after the issue of the Writ
- ◆ The Writ indicates where the Referendum is to take place

What is a Writ?

It is a formal written command issued by a court or ruling authority to act or refrain from acting in a certain way.

Who Can Vote in a Referendum?

Where the Referendum is held in the country of Belize:
◆ All those duly registered electors who are qualified to vote for the election of members of the House of Representatives, at the date of the holding of the Referendum

Where the Referendum is held only in an area of Belize:
◆ All those duly registered electors in that area

The Voting Process?

Please refer to the Voting Process as it is the same as for General or Municipal Elections.

BOUNDARY DELIMITATION BOUNDARY REDISTRICTING



The “What Is”

The term boundary delimitation or redistricting is used interchangeably and is defined as:

- ◆ To fix the limits of electoral boundaries
- ◆ To alter electoral boundaries

This is done from time to time to decrease substantial differences and inequalities in the representation and/or population ratio among electoral divisions.

The legal framework is set out in Section 90 of the Belize Constitution. Before 1988, Section 90 was specific as to the population of each constituency as stated:

“An electoral division shall consist of not less than 2,000 and not more than 3,000 registered electors.”

The above was repealed and replaced by Act No. 26 of 1988. As a result, Section 90 (1) (a) now states:

“Each electoral division shall have as nearly as may be, an equal number of persons eligible to vote.”

Other criteria to Section 90 (1) (a) are as follows:

- ◆ **Section 90 (1) (b)** states that total number of electoral divisions should **not be less** than 28.
- ◆ **Section 90 (2)** states that in fixing boundaries, regard is to be given to transport, physical features, and other facilities of the electoral division

Historical Overview

A historical overview of boundary redistricting demonstrates that electoral divisions existed as far back as 1938, when out of 13 members of the Legislative Council, only 5 were elected. The number increased by one to 6 in 1945. The table “Constituency and Boundary Changes by Year of Change”, shows boundary changes and increases in electoral divisions from 1945 to present.

Constituency and Boundary Changes by Year of Change

Year of Change	No. of Seats/ Division	New Constituencies
1945	6	Northern, Cayo, Toledo, Stann Creek, Belize (2)
1954	9	Belize District: Belize North, Belize South, Belize West, Belize Rural Orange Walk, Corozal, Cayo, Stann Creek, Toledo
1961	18	Belize District: Freetown, Pickstock, Fort George, Albert, Collet, Mesopotamia, Belize Rural North & South Cayo District: Cayo North & South Corozal District: North & South Orange Walk District: North & South Toledo District: North & South Stann Creek District: Town & Rural
1984	28	Belize District: Caribbean Shores, Lake Independence, Queen Square, Port Loyola Cayo District: Cayo West, Cayo Central Corozal District: Corozal South West, Corozal East, Corozal Bay

Year of Change	No. of Seats/ Division	New Constituencies
		<p>Stann Creek & Toledo Districts: Name change</p> <p>Orange Walk District: Orange Walk Central, Orange Walk East</p>
1993	29	<p>a) Belize District: Belize Rural Central</p> <p>b) Boundary delimitation changes to: Port Loyola, Collet (2 of 1993)</p>
1997	29	<p>Boundary delimitation changes to: Cayo Central and Cayo South (11 of 1997)</p>
1998	29	<p>Boundary delimitation changes to: Caribbean Shores, Freetown, Fort George, Pickstock, Belize Rural South, Belize Rural Central, Corozal North, Corozal Bay, Corozal South West, Orange Walk North, Orange Walk East, Orange Walk Central (16 of 1998, 13 of 1998)</p>
2002	29	<p>Boundary delimitation changes to: Stann Creek West and Toledo East ~~ Independence, Placencia, Seine Bight Villages and surrounding Communities of the Stann Creek District moved from Toledo East to Stann Creek West (11 of 2002)</p>

Source: "Who & What in Belizean Elections—1954 to 1993"; Myrtle Palacio, 1993