

## CHAPTER 18

### **PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION-RELATED ACTIVITIES BY CIVIL SERVANTS AND OFFICIALS UNDER THE POLITICAL APPOINTMENT SYSTEM AND ATTENDANCE OF PUBLIC FUNCTIONS BY BOTH CIVIL SERVANTS AND CANDIDATES**

#### **PART I : GENERAL**

18.1 This chapter sets out the general guidelines on the participation in election-related activities of a DC election by civil servants and officials under the Political Appointment System and the attendance at public functions by civil servants which are also attended by candidates. The guidelines in respect of civil servants are also equally applicable to the non-civil service contract staff of the Government. *[Amended in September 2011, September 2012 and September 2019]*

#### **IMPORTANT :**

“Candidate” includes a person who has publicly declared an intention to stand for election at any time before the end of the nomination period for the election, whether or not he/she has submitted a nomination form [s 2 of the ECICO].

#### **PART II : PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES BY CIVIL SERVANTS**

18.2 Civil servants who wish to participate in electioneering activities in a DC election should observe the regulations, rules and guidelines issued by

the Civil Service Bureau. Civil servants, other than directorate officers, Administrative Officers, Information Officers, Police Officers and those officers acting in the above grades or ranks with a view to substantive appointment thereto (i.e. other than acting for temporary relief purpose), may act as agents or assist in electioneering activities **provided that** they are not already appointed as the ROs, AROs, PROs, polling or counting staff, that there is no conflict of interest with their official duties, that no use of public resources is involved, and that no government uniform is worn. To avoid any unfairness or appearance of unfairness or conflict of interest, civil servants who work in a constituency or have extensive contacts with the public in a constituency are strongly advised not to accept appointment by a candidate in that constituency to be his/her agent and/or participate in electioneering activities in the constituency concerned. Civil servants who participate in electioneering activities, including the seeking of election donations, for any candidates should not use or give the impression of using any public resources in such activities. *[Amended in September 2007, August 2008, September 2011, September 2012 and September 2015]*

18.3 The guidelines set out in para. 18.2 above are equally applicable to the non-civil service contract staff of the Government. *[Amended in September 2015]*

### **PART III : ATTENDANCE OF PUBLIC FUNCTIONS BY CIVIL SERVANTS**

#### **On the Occasion of Being Invited**

18.4 Civil servants should exercise care in accepting invitations from persons or organisations to attend any public function that may also be attended by a candidate(s) (“the function”). *[Amended in September 2012]*

18.5 They should take such care when any person has publicly declared an intention to run for election in respect of a particular constituency or when the nomination commences, whichever is the earlier, up to the end of the polling day.

18.6 Before deciding to attend the function, a civil servant should satisfy himself/herself that: *[Amended in September 2012]*

- (a) by attending the function, he/she is performing an official duty normally required of the post he/she is currently holding; and
- (b) to his/her best knowledge, the organiser of the function has no intention whatsoever of making use of the function to promote or prejudice any candidate.

### **When Attending**

18.7 The EAC appeals to civil servants not to have photographs taken with candidates at the function since such photographs, if published, may be seen as their lending support to the candidates. A civil servant may do so, however, if the photograph taking: *[Amended in September 2012]*

- (a) arises from the need for him/her to perform his/her official duty at the function normally required of the post he/she is currently holding;
- (b) is a natural part of the function which, if he/she declines to participate, would be seen as breaching the protocol appropriate to that function; or

- (c) is participated by all other candidates of the same constituency.

*[Amended in September 2011]*

18.8 The guidelines set out from paras. 18.4 to 18.7 above are equally applicable to the non-civil service contract staff of the Government. *[Added in September 2012]*

#### **PART IV : ATTENDANCE OF PUBLIC FUNCTIONS BY CANDIDATES**

18.9 Similarly, the EAC appeals to all candidates who attend public functions not to have photographs taken with civil servants, since such photographs, if published, may be seen as an unfair advantage over other candidates. A candidate may do so, however, if the photograph taking:

- (a) arises from the need for him/her to perform his/her role at the function as requested by the function organiser;
- (b) is a natural part of the function which, if the candidate declines to participate, would be seen as breaching the protocol appropriate to that function; or
- (c) is participated by all other candidates of the same constituency.

*[Amended in September 2011]*

## **PART V : OFFICIALS UNDER THE POLITICAL APPOINTMENT SYSTEM**

18.10 The term “civil servants” used in the earlier parts of this chapter does not include officials under the Political Appointment System. Officials under the Political Appointment System are political appointees and they may belong to or be affiliated with political organisations. Politically appointed officials have to comply with a “Code for Officials under the Political Appointment System”. *[Amended in August 2008 and September 2012]*

18.11 Politically appointed officials may, subject to the guidelines below, participate in election-related activities. *[Amended in August 2008]*

18.12 Politically appointed officials are disqualified from being nominated as a candidate at an election of the CE, of the LegCo or of a DC. (For details related to the DC elections, please see para. 3.11 in Chapter 3) *[Amended in August 2008 and September 2012]*

18.13 As far as the DC elections are concerned, politically appointed officials should not use any public resources for any election-related activities. A politically appointed official should ensure that when taking part in such activities, great care should be taken that there is no actual or potential conflict of interest with the business of the Government or his/her own official duties. *[Amended in August 2008]*