

CODE OF CONDUCT

Guidelines to Proper Conduct of Election Officers
(Adopted from the **International Institute of**
Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)
Ethical and Professional Administration of Elections

1. “The ‘free` will of the people shall be the basis for the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal suffrage and shall be held by vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”
2. The overall legitimacy and acceptability of each election will depend on many factors, but the integrity of the administration of the elections is one of the most vital of these factors. The public will measure the legitimacy of an election on the basis of both the actual integrity of its administration, and the appearance of integrity of the election process. Because of this, candidates, political parties, and election observers will all give very close attention to the way that the election administration performs its function.
3. To ensure both the appearance and the actual integrity of the electoral process, election officers must conform to the following fundamental ethical principles:
 - a. Election administration must demonstrate respect for the law
 - b. Election administration must be non-partisan and neutral
 - c. Election administration must be transparent
 - d. Election administration must be accurate
 - e. Election administration must be designed to serve the voters.
4. The success of an election depends on the extent to which it is accepted as legitimate and binding by the participants in the political process. The expression of major policy decisions in a clear legal form provides the degree of certainty which is required for the development of a common understanding, by all participants in the process, of how it will be administered. If the election administration does not follow the law, and apply it equitably, and clearly explain the legitimate rationale for its decision, the common understanding of the participants may be affected, and support for the election process may be weakened.
5. An election administration should therefore:
 - i. Comply with the laws of the country.
 - ii. Ensure, within the legal framework of the country, the laws relating to elections are fully implemented in an impartial and equitable fashion.

- iii. Ensure, within the legal framework of the country, that every party, candidate, voter, and other participants in the election process is treated in a way that is fair and just, considering all the circumstances.
6. For an election to be successful, participants in the process have to be able to trust that the election officers will carry out their functions in a politically neutral way. If the people managing an election are perceived to have a commitment to any particular election result, the public credibility of the election process will be so seriously compromised that it will be difficult to restore faith in the process.

All Election Officers must therefore perform all their tasks in a manner that is strictly non-partisan and politically neutral.

7. Election Administrators should:

- i. Act in a strictly neutral and unbiased manner in every matter concerning a political party, candidate, vote, or member of the press or media.
- ii. Do nothing that could indicate, or be seen as indicating, partisan support for a candidate, political party, political actor or political tendency.
- iii. Conduct themselves at all times, in an irreproachable manner, exercise sound judgement, and observe the highest levels of personal discretion.
- iv. Disclose any relationship that could lead to a conflict of interest with their duties as election officers.
- v. Not accept any gift or favour from a political party, organization, or person involved in the election process.
- vi. Reject any improper influences, and, except as provided by law or custom, refrain from accepting directions relating to the performance of their tasks.
- vii. Not participate in any unauthorized activity, including any private activity that could lead to an actual or perceived conflict of interest with their duties as election officers.

- viii. Not participate in any activity, including any private activity that could lead to a perception of sympathy for a particular candidate, political party, political actor, or political tendency.
 - ix. Not express a view on any subject that is likely to be a political issue in the election.
 - x. Not communicate with any voter on a matter of partisan significance.
 - xi. Not wear, carry or display any obviously partisan party symbols or colours.
8. For an election to be successful, participants in the process have to feel able to accept the decisions of the election administration. Those participants will most likely feel able to accept those decisions if they can easily satisfy themselves that those decisions were made appropriately. To do that, they must have access to the information on which decisions are based.
9. In addition, election administrators and administrations should:
- i. Ensure that the agents of each political party or candidate can fully and effectively exercise their legal rights.
 - ii. Consult with participants in the electoral process on a regular basis, and in relation to specific decisions, if it is appropriate to do so in the circumstances.
 - iii. Provide an explanation in response to reasonable requests, for a decision they have made as part of the electoral process or a decision made as part of the general operation of the election administration.
 - iv. Establish a system that allows interested parties to access, in a timely manner, all critical information, documents, and database used in an election process, or used in the normal operation of the election administration.
 - v. Disclose any deficiency in the administration of an election if it comes to their attention.
10. Election Officers and administrations should work to provide to every voter, the highest quality service required to enable voters to exercise their rights with the least possible inconvenience, given the circumstances and country's legal framework. In particular, they should:

- i. Make it as convenient as possible for voters to participate in the election process.

Ensure that voters adequately understand the election process.

- ii. Do everything possible to provide a way to vote for people with special needs, such as blind, physically handicapped, or illiterate voters or voters living in remote areas.