

PSC CIRCULAR

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PSC Circular No. 9/2006

To: Chief Executive Officers and Heads of Department File:29/557 - 5

Subject: 2006 GENERAL ELECTIONS & CIVIL SERVANTS FOR ELECTION DUTIES OR CANDIDACY FOR ELECTIONS Date:09/03/06

1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 The polling for the 2006 General Elections is scheduled to begin on Saturday 06th May, 2006 and end on Saturday 13th May, 2006.
- 1.2 The Commission wishes to clarify its position in relation to the involvement of civil servants in election duties; civil servants' candidacy for election and the conduct of civil servants during the lead up to the general elections and the immediate post election period.

2.0 **Civil Servants Engaged On Election Duties**

- 2.1 Preparatory work involved in the lead up to the general elections which include the updating of the electoral roll; public awareness programmes; training of polling and counting officials and so forth. In order to achieve these, civil servants are expected to assist in this important democratic process.
- 2.2 Addressees are therefore requested to assist the Elections Office and Divisional Commissioners in identifying staff in your Ministries and Departments who may be deployed for the following election duties:
 - Polling from 06/05/2006 to 13/05/2006.
 - Counting from 15/05/2006 to 17/05/2006.
- 2.3 In identifying staff for election duties, addressees must ensure that sufficient staff numbers are retained in the Ministries/Departments to maintain normal operations during the general elections period.

2.4 All lists of staff to be released for elections duties should be submitted by Monday 20th March, 2006 to the Elections Office or the office of the respective Divisional Commissioner, who shall be responsible for making the final selection, and subsequently notify the Ministries/Departments concerned. Note that the training of officials will commence on Monday 27th March, 2006 so your prompt submission in this respect will be appreciated.

2.5 All officers released for election duties will be required to undertake the necessary and appropriate training. Their release and absence for election duties shall be treated as duty leave.

3.0 **Political Activities of Civil Servants**

3.1 Civil servants are reminded not to indulge in active political or party activities and must maintain a proper reticence in discussing public affairs. It is a disciplinary offence for a civil servant to take active part in political affairs other than in the exercise of his/her official functions.

3.2 General Order 309 stipulates that *"no officer or employee shall, without the express permission of the Secretary for the Public Service (Chief Executive Officer for Public Service)*, whether on duty or leave of absences:*

- i) *Act as the editor of any newspaper, magazine or periodical or take part directly or indirectly in the management thereof;*
- ii) *Contribute to, whether anonymously or otherwise, or publish in any newspaper, magazine or periodical or cause to be published in any manner, anything, which may reasonably be regarded as of a political or administrative nature;*
- iii) *Speak in public or broadcast on any matter, which may reasonably be regarded as of a political or administrative nature;*
- iv) *Allow himself (herself)* to be interviewed or express any opinion for publication on any issue of an administrative or political nature or on matters affecting the administration, defence or military resources of Fiji.*

He (She) may however, publish in his own name, matters relating to subjects of general interest."*

[Note: Words in brackets followed by an asterisk sign are inserted]

3.3 PSC Circular No. 30/2004 dated 18th August 2004, on public comments by civil servants is also relevant and must be taken note of and strictly

complied with.

4.0 **Political Party Membership**

- 4.1 Civil servants may, however, be members of a political party and may subscribe to the funds of the party. They may attend private political meetings of the party and may speak and vote at such meetings. They may not, on the contrary, hold office in a political party nor may they speak or vote at public political meetings.
- 4.2 Civil servants who are eligible are required to register themselves as voters and cast their votes in the normal manner at the general elections. Likewise, civil servants may cast their votes for elections to local government bodies.

5.0 **Candidacy for Elections**

- 5.1 Civil servants who consider themselves as prospective candidates for election should not issue any statement to the electorate, nor in any way publicly announce themselves as candidates or prospective candidates before informing the Public Service Commission of their intention. Civil servants who have made public this intention before or after informing this office, must immediately tender their resignation or retirement from the Service.
- 5.2 The requirement for early notification of an officer's candidature is also to facilitate proper staffing arrangements and prevent possible disruptions to ministry/departmental operations and service delivery.
- 5.3 For this purpose subsections (1) and (2) of section 67 of the Constitution are quoted below for the information of those intending to be candidates for the election:

"Candidates who are public officeholders

67. – (1) A person who holds a public office is deemed to have vacated that office immediately before the time at which his or her signed nomination as a candidate for election to the House of Representatives is delivered to the returning officer.

(2) A person who holds a public office is deemed to have vacated that office immediately before the time at which he or she is appointed by the President as a member of the Senate."

- 5.3 Given the exceptional circumstances, the usual notification period of resignation (30 days) and retirement (6 months) may be waived.
- 5.4 In addition, all annual leave, vacation leave, long service leave,

pension or gratuity due to an officer shall be fully compensated with effect from the date he or she tenders his or her letter of resignation or retirement.

6.0 **Public Funds and Facilities Not to be Used**

6.1 Public funds will not be used to meet expenses in respect of any political activity and this includes, claims for mileage or subsistence allowance in respect of such activity.

6.2 Government facilities and resources shall not be used in support of an election campaign or any political activity. Political pamphlets and posters must not be distributed or displayed in government offices, buildings or quarters.

7.0 **Election Campaigning**

7.1 Campaigning or participation in any political activity by a civil servant is forbidden. Civil servants must not attempt to publicly further the activities or aspirations of a political party, or an election candidate.

8.0 **Role and Conduct of Civil Servants**

8.1 The role and conduct of civil servants in the lead up to and during the general election is extremely important, especially in the polling and counting processes, to ensure that the election is conducted fairly, effectively and as efficiently as possible. In this regard, all civil servants must continue to uphold the Public Service Values and comply with the Public Service Code of Conduct.

8.2 As polling officials, civil servants' patience and understanding will be tested when dealing with candidates, party officials and voters alike. Polling officials will have to demonstrate honesty, diligence, patience and understanding to enable this important democratic voting process to proceed unhindered.

8.3 As counting officials, civil servants should portray a high level of dedication, commitment, patience, diligence and honesty in ensuring that the votes counting progresses without unnecessary delay.

9.0 **Clarification**

9.1 Addressees are requested to give this Circular the widest possible circulation.

9.2 Any clarification should be sought from Mr. Peniame Naqasima, Director Employee Relations, Public Service Commission on telephone

number: 3314588 ext. 408 or on email address pnaqasima@psc.gov.fj

- 9.3 The Public Service Commission is confident that addressees and all civil servants and government wage employees whether directly engaged in election duties or not will play your roles as true professionals and the Commission look upon you to uphold the integrity, independence, impartiality and the values of the Public Service.



A. Jale

Chief Executive Officer - Public Service