



Global Expertise. Local Solutions.  
Sustainable Democracy.

# **Elections in Georgia**

## *2014 Local Self-Government Elections*

### Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1850 K Street, NW | Fifth Floor | Washington, D.C. 20006 | [www.IFES.org](http://www.IFES.org)

June 9, 2014

# Frequently Asked Questions

Who will Georgians elect on June 15, 2014? .....	1
Why are the local self-government elections important? What is at stake? .....	1
What are the changes to the local self-government elections in 2014? .....	2
Will there be any changes in the way voters are identified on the voter lists on Election Day? .....	3
What is the current political situation in Georgia? .....	3
What is the state of political parties in Georgia? .....	4
When will the results be announced? .....	4
What laws regulate the self-government elections in Georgia? .....	4
Who is eligible to run for mayor, <i>gamgebeli</i> , or <i>sakrebulo</i> member?.....	5
What political parties are registered for the 2014 local self-government elections? .....	5
Who is running to be the next Mayor of Tbilisi? .....	6
What is the election management body? What are its powers? .....	7
How many Precinct Election Commissions are there and how are its members trained?.....	7
How many people are registered to vote on Election Day? .....	7
Is out-of-country voting allowed?.....	7
How many ballot papers will voters receive on Election Day? .....	8
What are the rules governing the rights of local and international observers?.....	8
What is the legal process for electoral dispute adjudication?.....	8
What are the rules that govern the media? .....	9
Who is eligible to vote?.....	10
How will persons with disabilities cast their vote?.....	10
What, if any, role does the State play in campaign finance?.....	11
What language will ballot papers be printed in? .....	12

*Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Georgian electoral authorities as of June 9, 2014, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

What is the gender balance within candidate lists? ..... 12

Are there incentives for parties to nominate women? ..... 13

Resources ..... 14

## Who will Georgians elect on June 15, 2014?

On June 15, Georgians will go to the polls to elect their municipal government representatives. Across Georgia, citizens will elect 2,088 council members to 71 local councils called *sakrebulo*s. In addition, 12 mayors of self-governed cities and 59 chief executives (*gamgebelis*) of local self-government municipalities will be elected directly. All of these local self-government representatives are elected for three-year terms (for this election only, as the next election should revert back to four-year terms).

*Sakrebulo*s are elected through a mixed-voting system, which relies on a combination of single-mandate districts determined by first-past-the-post rules (i.e. winner takes all), and a proportional system based on party lists. Mayors are elected by a 50 percent plus one majority of voters. If no candidate receives 50 percent plus one of all votes cast in the first round, then a second round is held between the top two contestants. *Gamgebelis* must also pass a 50 percent threshold in the first round, otherwise a second round will take place. This is the first year that mayors outside of the capital<sup>1</sup> and *gamgebelis* will be directly elected. Tbilisi was previously the only city to directly elect its mayor during the 2010 local self-government elections.

## Why are the local self-government elections important? What is at stake?

Building off of the 2012 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections, which saw historic transitions of legislative and executive power through the ballot box, the local self-government elections represent Georgia's shift toward a more decentralized governing structure. The passage of Election Code amendments on March 7, 2014 called for directly elected mayors in 12 cities and *gamgebelis* for 59 municipalities (in contrast to the previous legislation that limited direct mayoral elections to Tbilisi), constituting a significant change to Georgia's electoral democracy by introducing a greater degree of public accountability on the part of mayors. Under the amended code, the number of proportionally awarded party-list seats in all municipalities was increased to 15 while the number of party-seats in self-governing cities will continue to be 10 for self-governing cities with less than 75,000 inhabitants and 15 for cities with more than 75,000. In addition, new mechanisms for additional state funding for political parties were established.

For political parties, the local self-government elections have particularly high stakes, since the results of the *sakrebulo* party-list races will be used to determine parties' eligibility for state funding and access to television air time in the next parliamentary elections, which are expected in 2016. With the threshold for gaining a seat in the *sakrebulo* lowered from 5 to 4 percent of the total vote, and the threshold to qualify for state funding at 3 percent, the competition between Georgia's many smaller political parties and blocs will be intense. Access to state funding can be highly advantageous to a smaller political party in a crowded election environment. In an effort to exceed the 3 and 4 percent thresholds, some parties created political blocs for the local self-government elections.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Elections will be held for mayor in 12 cities, including the capital Tbilisi.

<sup>2</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. "Registered Political Subjects (Parties/ Blocs)." Accessed online on June 5, 2014, at <http://cec.gov.ge/en/municipal-elections-2014/election-subjects>.

It is important to view the local self-government elections in the context of the most recent presidential and parliamentary elections. The October 2012 parliamentary elections were widely considered a milestone for Georgia's democratic trajectory. Factors such as increased political competition and citizen participation; improved election management body administration; heightened trust in the voter list; and a proactive civil society contributed to the country's first-ever peaceful transition of power through the ballot box. The October 2013 presidential elections followed suit, and represented continued progress.

Georgia's recent electoral experience demonstrates the viability of participatory democracy as a vehicle for change. Georgian institutions charged with administering the electoral process, namely the Central Election Commission, gained increased legitimacy and the confidence of voters due to their professional, impartial and equitable administration of elections. Civil society, which had been struggling to reassert itself in post-Rose Revolution Georgia, is emerging as a competent and increasingly reliable partner in ensuring accountability.

## What are the changes to the local self-government elections in 2014?

On March 7 and April 17, 2014, the Georgian parliament adopted an election-related package of bills that affects the administration of the June 15 local elections.

Key changes to the Election Code include:

- Mayors and *gamgebelis* will be directly elected for the first time;<sup>3</sup>
- The number of cities granted self-governing status has increased from five to 12;<sup>4</sup>
- The minimal threshold for electing Mayors and *gamgebelis* in the first round of voting was increased from 30 percent to 50 percent;<sup>5</sup>
- The threshold for gaining a seat in the *sakrebulo* lowered from 5 to 4 percent of the total vote;
- The number of self-governing municipalities was increased from 64 to 71;
- The number of party list seats was increased from 10 to 15 in most *sakrebulo*s;
- *Sakrebulo*s are empowered to remove Mayors or *gamgebelis* in a two-thirds vote of no-confidence;
- New mechanisms for additional state funding for political parties were introduced; and
- New voter verification procedures on Election Day, with voters' pictures and gender to be included on the registration list.

Apart from these changes, the overall system of electing *sakrebulo* representatives will remain the same.

One major implication of the new amendments is that local self-governments will be more representative, since all local representatives are now directly elected by Georgian voters. However, Georgian civil society organizations have pointed to the new amendment that enables *sakrebulo*s to remove mayors or

---

<sup>3</sup> Before the changes to the election code passed, Tbilisi was the only city in Georgia which directly elected its mayor.

<sup>4</sup> The seven new self-governing cities are: Telavi, Mtskheta, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Ambrolauri, Ozurgeti and Zugdidi. The five original self-governing cities are: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, Batumi and Poti.

<sup>5</sup> In 2010, Tbilisi was the only city to directly elect its mayor, and had a threshold of 30 percent.

*gamgebelis* in a two-thirds vote of no-confidence as a potential vulnerability and contradictory to the will of the voters.<sup>6</sup>

Increasing party list seats while lowering the party threshold serves to benefit smaller parties' chances of electing more representatives to *sakrebulo*s. Attaining 3 percent or higher of seats in *sakrebulo*s will also have important financial implications, since parties passing the threshold will be eligible for state funding and television airtime for the 2016 parliamentary elections.

While initiative groups have the right to name independent candidates for *sakrebulo*s in single-mandate districts, independent candidates are prohibited from running for mayor or *gamgebeli*.

## **Will there be any changes in the way voters are identified on the voter lists on Election Day?**

Changes to the Election Code passed on March 7 called for a digital database of voters' photos in an effort to strike duplicate entries from the voter registry. The Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) was tasked to complete this work. Once completed, the registry was turned over to the election administration. Striking duplicate entries helps prevent voter fraud by ensuring that one person is not registered under different identities and thus upholds the principle of "one person, one vote."

For the first time in a Georgian election, a photo as well as a designation of the voter's gender will appear next to his or her name on voter lists. This will allow Precinct Election Commission officials, observers and party proxies to visually verify the identity of voters by comparing voters' identification cards with the photo attached to the voter list. If the photo does not match, a Precinct Election Commission official is responsible for initiating proper protocols, which include sending information for verification to the PSDA and if necessary to the police for further verification.<sup>7</sup>

## **What is the current political situation in Georgia?**

Over the course of the past two elections in 2012 and 2013, the Georgian Dream coalition (GD) has gained control of both the presidency and parliament. Georgia's president, Giorgi Margvelashvili, took office in November 2013, bringing an end to former President Mikhail Saakashvili's 10-year presidency that began after the 2003 Rose Revolution. Irakli Garibashvili became prime minister shortly after President Margvelashvili's inauguration when former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili announced his early resignation. Moreover, GD currently controls 85 of the 150 total seats in parliament, with former President Saakashvili's United National Movement comprising the strongest opposition in parliament with 65 seats.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Transparency International – Georgia. "The New Local Self-Government Code: Overview of the Main Novelties." Page 2. Published March 10, 2014. <http://tigeorgia.electricebners.net/en/blog/new-local-self-government-code-overview-main-novelties?page=3>.

<sup>7</sup> Election Code of Georgia, Article 184<sup>1</sup> (5), <http://cec.gov.ge/en/saarchevno-administracia-2-ge/samartlebrivi-aqtebi-27-ge/laws-geo-206-ge/election-code-of-georgia-14927.page>

<sup>8</sup> For more information and interactive graphics for the 2012 parliamentary elections and 2013 presidential elections, please see: <http://civil.ge/eng/category.php?id=32>.

## What is the state of political parties in Georgia?

Georgia has a multi-party system composed of over a dozen active political parties. These parties compete in parliamentary and municipal elections (some as part of electoral blocs) to gain representation in the respective legislatures, which are determined by a mixed-system of direct and proportional voting. Additionally, many parties nominate a candidate to run for President.

Currently, there are two major political entities that dominate the political landscape in Georgia: the Georgian Dream coalition (GD), which currently controls the parliament and the executive branch, and the United National Movement (UNM), which controlled the parliament from 2004-2012 and the presidency from 2004-2013 and is now the largest opposition force in the country.

There are also a host of other smaller political parties that are competing in the local self-government elections. Some parties chose to unite to form political blocs, which nominate a joint candidate. In order for political parties to gain access to state campaign finance funding, they must become “qualified” by winning a certain percentage of all votes cast in the most recent elections. For the local self-government elections, parties or blocs that receive 3 percent or more of votes in the proportional *sakrebulo* elections will become “qualified” for the next parliamentary elections in 2016 and therefore eligible for state funding and free television air time.

## When will the results be announced?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) will summarize the election results no later than 24 days after Election Day. Due to the large number of ballot papers (three per voter, as compared to one in previous elections), it is anticipated that counting procedures will require more time than was the case during last year’s presidential election.<sup>9</sup> Interim and final results are published on the CEC’s website.

If no candidate attains more than 50 percent of all votes cast to be elected a mayor or *gamgebeli*, then a run-off will be held two weeks after the results are announced.

## What laws regulate the self-government elections in Georgia?

There are seven key documents regulating local self-government elections in Georgia:

- Constitution of Georgia
- Election Code of Georgia
- Law on Political Unions of Citizens
- Central Election Commission Regulations
- Criminal Code of Georgia
- Code of Administrative Offenses of Georgia

---

<sup>9</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. “Frequently Asked Questions: Municipal Elections of Georgia June 15, 2014.” Page 2. Accessed online on June 5, 2014, at <http://www.cec.gov.ge/en/faq-55-ge>.

- Local Self-Government Code of Georgia

The Local Self-Government Code that passed on February 5, 2014 combines several legislative acts that previously regulated self-governance in Georgia.<sup>10</sup> Upon its enactment, the following laws were repealed:

- The Organic Law of Georgia on the Local Self-Government
- The Law of Georgia on the State Supervision over Activities of Local Authorities
- The Law of Georgia on the Capital of Georgia - Tbilisi
- The Law of Georgia on the Property of a Self-Governing Unit

## **Who is eligible to run for mayor, *gamgebeli*, or *sakrebulo* member?**

There are two different sets of criteria that mandate who can run for the positions of mayor, *gamgebeli*, or *sakrebulo* member.

Any Georgian citizen 25 or older who is registered to vote and has permanently resided in Georgia for at least five years and lived in Georgia for at least two years prior to the appointment of elections (April 14) is eligible to run for mayor of a self-governing city or *gamgebeli* of a municipality. Mayors and *gamgebelis* must be nominated by political parties or blocs and cannot be nominated by individuals or initiative groups.<sup>11</sup> These are the only elected offices in Georgia that have this restriction.

Any Georgian citizen 21 or older who is registered to vote and has permanently resided in Georgia for at least five years and lived in Georgia for at least two years prior to the appointment of elections (April 14) is eligible to be elected as a *sakrebulo* member. Candidates running for a *sakrebulo* majoritarian seat can be nominated by an individual, political party, or initiative group.

## **What political parties are registered for the 2014 local self-government elections?**

Twenty-four political parties or blocs are registered for the 2014 municipal elections.<sup>12</sup>

Thirty-four political parties submitted applications of registration to the Central Election Commission.

The 24 registered parties/blocs are:

---

<sup>10</sup> Transparency International – Georgia. “The New Local Self-Government Code: Overview of the Main Novelties.” Page 1. Published March 10, 2014. <http://tidgeorgia.electricense.net/en/blog/new-local-self-government-code-overview-main-novelties?page=3>.

<sup>11</sup> National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. “Statement of the National Democratic Institute Pre-Election Delegation to Georgia.” Page 5. Published May 2, 2014. <http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PreElectionDelegation-StatementMay2-2014.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. “Registered Political Subjects (Parties/ Blocs).” Accessed online on June 5, 2014, at <http://www.cec.gov.ge/en/municipal-elections-2014/election-subjects/registered-political-subjects-parties-blocs.page>.

- Union for Restoration of Justice – Voice of the Nation: the Lord is our Truth
- Greens Party of Georgia
- Political Movement of Law Enforcement Veterans
- Georgian Party
- Alliance of Patriots of Georgia
- Unity Hall
- National Democratic Movement
- Georgian Labour Party
- Future Georgia
- Christian-Democratic Party (Christian Democrats)
- Merab Kostava Society
- Christian Democratic Movement
- Christian-Democratic People's Party
- National Democratic Party
- Reformers
- The Way of Georgia
- Party of People
- Labour Council of Georgia
- People's Party
- Freedom – Way of Zviad Gamsakhurdia
- Non-Parliamentary Opposition (Election Bloc)
- Georgian Dream (Election Bloc)
- Self-governance to the People (Election Bloc)
- United National Movement (Election Bloc)

## **Who is running to be the next Mayor of Tbilisi?**

Fourteen candidates (listed below) are registered to run for the office of Mayor of Tbilisi in the 2014 elections.

- Mikheil Saluashvili (For the Name of the Lord/the Lord is our Truth)
- Giorgi Laghidze (Future Georgia)
- Asmat Tkabladze (Shalva Natelashvili/Georgian Labour Party)
- Giorgi Gachechiladze (Giorgi Gachechiladze/Greens Party)
- Roin Liparteliani (Labour Council of Georgia)
- Dimitri Lortkipanidze (Nino Burjanadze/Unified Opposition)
- Irakli Ghlonti (Irakli Ghlonti/Reformers)
- Kakha Kukava (Election Bloc/Non-Parliamentary Opposition “Kakha Kukava, Pikria Chikhradze”)
- Davit Narmania (Election Bloc/Georgian Dream)
- Giorgi Liluashvili (Merab Kostava Society)
- Irma Inashvili (Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi/Alliance of Patriots of Georgia)
- Teimuraz Murvanidze (Salome Zourabichvili/The Way of Georgia)
- Sergo Javakhidze (Election Bloc/Self-Governance to the People)
- Nikanor Melia (Election Bloc/United National Movement)

## **What is the election management body? What are its powers?**

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia is the country's supreme election management body. The CEC is principally responsible for ensuring preparation and conduct of presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections, as well as referenda and plebiscites. The CEC is also tasked with ensuring that eligible Georgian citizens have the right to vote and run for office in Georgia.

In its activities, the CEC is guided by the Constitution of Georgia, the Election Code of Georgia and other laws that pertain to elections. The CEC is headquartered in Tbilisi and is held accountable by the Parliament of Georgia.

## **How many Precinct Election Commissions are there and how are its members trained?**

For the June 15 local self-government elections, some 48,000 workers will be deployed to staff Georgia's 3,617 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). Each PEC is composed of 13 members, of which seven are appointed by political parties and six are nonpartisan members elected by the corresponding District Election Commission (DEC). In order to prepare the 48,000 election workers for duty, the Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings (Training Center) is conducting a four-stage training process, including an election-day simulation, for all precinct level officials. The Training Center is an independent legal entity under Georgian law, however it is accountable to the CEC. The Training Center is responsible for training the staff of DEC's and PEC's ahead of elections.

## **How many people are registered to vote on Election Day?**

On May 1, 2014, the Central Election Commission announced that there are a total of 3,472,772 voters registered to vote in the June 15 local self-government elections. This is a decrease from the 3,537,719 Georgians registered for the 2013 presidential election and the 3,613,851 for the 2012 parliamentary elections.

As of May 1, 2014, Kutaisi and Tbilisi's Samgori district contain the largest constituencies (154,753 and 134,885 voters), while the smallest constituencies are the mountainous Kazbegi district in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region and Lentekhi district in the mountainous Racha-Lechkhumi region (5,295 and 5,922 voters).<sup>13</sup>

## **Is out-of-country voting allowed?**

No. Out-of-country voting is not allowed for the 2014 local self-government elections.

---

<sup>13</sup> A detailed breakdown of the number of voters by regions and districts can be found here: <http://www.cec.gov.ge/uploads/other/27/27697.pdf>

## How many ballot papers will voters receive on Election Day?

Each voter will receive three ballot papers, one for each of the following:

- Mayor or *gamgebeli*
- *Sakrebulo* member, Party list (proportional system)
- *Sakrebulo* member, Majoritarian (single-mandate system)

## What are the rules governing the rights of local and international observers?

According to Articles 39, 40, 41 and 42 of the Election Code of Georgia, registered local/international observers, media, and party proxies may observe sessions of the election commissions and be present at the polling place at any time during polling day. They may move freely within the precinct territory and observe all stages of the polling process from any point of the precinct in an unhindered manner, as long as they do not disrupt the voting process.

An observer may take part in the inspection of ballot boxes before they are sealed and after they are opened. They may also observe registration of voters; issuance of ballot papers and special envelopes; and certification, again, as long as they do not disrupt the voting process. Observers are prohibited from interfering with the functions and activities of the election commissions. They may not exert undue influence upon the free expression of the will of voters, wear symbols or signs of any candidate or party, nor may they breach other requirements of the Election Code.

Local observer organizations must register with the Central Election Commission (CEC) if they plan to observe in multiple election districts, or with the appropriate District Election Commission (DEC) if they plan to observe only one election district. The registration deadline for local observer organizations is June 5. The registration deadline for international observer organizations is June 8.

## What is the legal process for electoral dispute adjudication?

The electoral legislation indicates which body has jurisdiction over certain types of complaints. Precinct Election Commissions (PEC), District Election Commissions (DEC) and the Central Election Commission (CEC) are responsible for addressing violations of electoral legislation.<sup>14</sup> The law also clearly provides the right to appeal to the upper election commission (DEC or CEC) or to the courts (district/city courts and courts of appeal). The Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) is responsible for addressing some election-related media violations as specified in the Election Code and in GNCC regulations, and the district or city court will rule on an administrative violation protocol issued by the

---

<sup>14</sup> *Election Code*, art. 77, art. 14 § 1 (j,u).

[http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election Code of Georgia EN - codified.pdf](http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election%20Code%20of%20Georgia%20EN%20-%20codified.pdf)

GNCC.<sup>15</sup> The GNCC has the power to investigate violations on its own initiative or on the basis of complaints received. The State Audit Office of Georgia (SAOG), through its Financial Monitoring Service (FMS) department, has been mandated to adjudicate violations related to campaign finance. Its powers were reduced by a May 8, 2012 amendment that removed its sanctioning power. Only the administrative courts can decide to sanction based on the protocol of administrative violation filed by the SAOG to the city or district court.<sup>16</sup>

The administrative courts have the jurisdiction to hear appeals on alleged election violations and specific deadlines for this process are specified in the Election Code and in the Code of Administrative Offenses of Georgia. The criminal courts can also be involved in an election case that amounts to a crime. It should be noted that the CEC and the SAOG refer criminal cases, such as vote buying, to the prosecutor's office.<sup>17</sup> The Constitutional Court hears complaints related to breaches of the Constitution with regard to elections.

Finally, an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) was established in May 2012 to encourage dialogue between the relevant stakeholders and to issue recommendations related to alleged violations of the law during the election cycle.<sup>18</sup> Governmental officials, representatives of political parties, NGOs and members of the international community participated in the dialogue. However, the task force does not have any sanctioning power, and its decisions are not binding, meaning the IATF has a mediatory function, but not an adjudicatory function.

The Election Code requires all complaints regarding violations of polling procedures to be filed at PECs on Election Day. Polling day complaints must be "resolved immediately" by the PEC, while complaints related to the vote counting process are to be forwarded to DEC's within three days. The application/complaint must be registered and addressed within one day of registration at the DEC level. DEC-level decisions may be appealed to the relevant court or the CEC. The decision of the court may be appealed within one day of its delivery to the Court of Appeals.<sup>19</sup> Decisions by the Court of Appeals are final.

## What are the rules that govern the media?

Article 44 of the Election Code of Georgia covers the rules that govern the media.

The rules regulating the media's role in reporting on elections are governed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and media outlets must apply to the CEC for accreditation.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *Election Code*, arts. 51 § 15, and 77 § 5<sup>1</sup>; Georgian National Communications Commission. *Regulation no.9*, art. 9.

<sup>16</sup> The Organic Law of Georgia on Law on Political Unions of Citizens [hereinafter, *Law on the Political Unions of Citizens*] (Nov. 1997), Parliamentary Gazette, #45, 21 Nov. 1997, art. 34<sup>1</sup> and 34 § 2 (11-13).

<sup>17</sup> "The Chamber of Control of Georgia shall be authorized to apply to prosecuting agencies if signs of crime have been detected." *Law on the Political Unions of Citizens*, art. 34<sup>1</sup> § 2 (j).

<sup>18</sup> *Election Code*, art. 48 § 9. [http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election\\_Code\\_of\\_Georgia\\_EN\\_-\\_codified.pdf](http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election_Code_of_Georgia_EN_-_codified.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> See Article 77 of the Election Code:

[http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election\\_Code\\_of\\_Georgia\\_EN\\_-\\_codified.pdf](http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/August%202012,%20Election_Code_of_Georgia_EN_-_codified.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. "Accreditation of Media Representatives." Page 1. Published April 17, 2014. <http://www.cec.gov.ge/en/municipal-elections-2014/observers-and-media/accreditation-of-media-representatives2.page>.

Media representatives have the right to observe the election process, including the time before, during and after Election Day, in a free and unhindered manner. Specific rights afforded to accredited media representatives include attending election commissions' meetings, being present at polling station and being able to move freely within the precinct territory. No more than three representatives from an accredited media organization can be present at an election precinct at the same time.

Media representatives are not entitled to interfere with the functions and activities of the election commissions or bias voters by campaigning for a candidate or wearing a candidate's symbol or signs. A media decree adopted by the CEC for the 2012 parliamentary elections, and then further amended during the 2013 presidential elections, incorporated regulations on media activities. Persons authorized to be present in the polling place can without hindrance record the voting process of high-profile voters (officials holding political positions, leaders of election subjects and political unions, and religious leaders), after which photo and video cameras shall be taken outside of the polling place. Further, one media company is entitled to conduct photo and video recording in one polling place once and for not more than 10 minutes. If the representative wants to conduct photo and video recording for more than 10 minutes, s/he must do so from a special place allocated at the polling place. The Precinct Election Commissions are responsible for monitoring and enforcing the time limits on media recording.

In the course of the pre-election campaign, a broadcaster must remain fair and impartial, pursuant to the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, the Code of Conduct of Broadcasters.

The rules governing the accreditation and rights of media representatives can be found on the CEC website (see the Resources section).

## **Who is eligible to vote?**

Georgian citizens who are 18 years old by Election Day can vote in the 2014 local elections.

Voter eligibility is restricted for Georgian citizens who are currently serving a prison sentence for a crime more severe than a misdemeanor (up to three years). Citizens who are deemed mentally incompetent/incapable by a court are also not allowed to vote.

## **How will persons with disabilities cast their vote?**

The Central Election Commission (CEC) actively works to ensure an equal electoral environment for all voters, including voters with disabilities.<sup>21</sup> In 2012, the CEC established a working group tasked with simplifying electoral processes for voters with disabilities.

As a result of the activities of the working group, the CEC created a work plan for the 2012-2014 election cycle that addresses three main interventions to enable voters with disabilities to exercise their right to vote:

---

<sup>21</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. "Midterm Report of the Central Election Commission of Georgia on Activities Implemented to Simplify Electoral Processes for Voters with Disabilities." Page 3. Accessed online on June 5, 2014, at <http://cesko.ge/uploads/other/26/26429.pdf>.

- Adaptation of election precincts for voters with disabilities
- Education campaigns targeting persons with disabilities
- Deploying mobile teams on Election Day to transport voters with disabilities to election precincts

In order to make polling stations accessible, the CEC will be erecting permanent and temporary ramps at select election precincts, as well as accessible voting booths for wheelchair users. Tactile ballots in a “frame/form” style will allow blind voters to cast their ballot independently. For the first time, the CEC will distribute handheld magnification devices to each election precinct that will enable voters with low vision to mark their ballots independently. The CEC will also distribute videos on election participation for voters with hearing disabilities on Election Day.

Mobile ballot boxes will also be utilized during the June 15 local self-government elections between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., which will allow voters unable to reach polling stations to exercise their right to vote.<sup>22</sup>

## **What, if any, role does the State play in campaign finance?**

The State Audit Office of Georgia (SAOG) is responsible for carrying out oversight of campaign finance. On April 22, 2014, a temporary commission comprised of NGO representatives and based at the SAOG was created to exchange and analyze information concerning possible violations of political finance regulations and provide consultations and recommendations to the SAOG.

All contestants must submit three financial reports to the SAOG covering three week periods at dates determined by the Law on Political Unions of Citizens.

The schedule for candidates to submit financial reports is as follows:

- May 7 (activity period covering April 14-May 4)
- May 28 (activity period covering May 5-25)
- June 18 (activity period covering May 26-June 15)

Georgian law restricts campaign contributions from: physical and legal entities of foreign countries; international organizations and movements (except when lectures, workshops and other public activities are held); a state agency, state organization, legal entity of public law or enterprises with state shares (except when otherwise prescribed by the Law on Political Unions of Citizens); non-profit legal entity and religious organizations (except when lectures, workshops and other public arrangements are held); stateless persons; and anonymous donors.

The total amount of money donated by each citizen to a political party should not exceed \$60,000 GEL (\$34,000 USD) per year, and the total amount of money donated by a legal entity should not exceed \$120,000 GEL (\$68,000 USD). The membership fee for party members should not exceed \$1,200 GEL (\$675 USD) per year. In-kind donations are permitted and the legislation allows parties to receive loans for

---

<sup>22</sup> Central Election Commission of the Republic of Georgia. “Frequently Asked Questions: Municipal Elections of Georgia June 15, 2014.” Page 2. Accessed online on June 5, 2014, at <http://www.cec.gov.ge/en/faq-55-ge>.

election campaigning of up to \$1,000,000 GEL (\$566,250 USD). However, the process of obtaining loans and subsequent reporting lack sufficient safeguards and regulation.<sup>23</sup> The law does not place restrictions on political parties for types of expenditures.

Candidates must establish an elections campaign fund, from which all campaign expenses must be charged. The rules regulating election campaign funds apply to political parties/blocs, initiative groups, and individuals. The use of unauthorized or undocumented funds is prohibited.

## **What language will ballot papers be printed in?**

The ballots will be printed in Georgian throughout the entire country. Additionally, ballots will be available in Azerbaijani and Armenian. These provisions are detailed in Article 63 of Georgia's Election Code.

## **What is the gender balance within candidate lists?**

Women in Georgia comprise 59 percent of eligible voters, but only 11 percent of elected politicians. Georgia ranks fifth from last out of 57 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe member states in terms of the percentage of women in parliament and penultimate in terms of the percentage of women represented in local municipalities. Barriers to women's representation in Georgia are many, spanning from societal perceptions of gender roles (i.e. that politics is for men), to legal and political frameworks.

In the 2010 municipal elections, women were elected to only 10 percent of all *sakrebulo* seats. Specifically, of the 1,695 *sakrebulo* seats, 169 women were elected. Women gained 12 percent of the parliamentary seats in the 2012 elections, an improvement over the 6.2 percent in 2008; however, progress toward equal representation of women in elected government has been slow. In 2013, there were only three women registered as candidates for presidency out of 23 contenders. Of the 14 mayoral candidates in Tbilisi set to run for the June 15, 2014 local self-government elections, only two are women. For the eleven remaining self-governing cities, eight out of 73 (11 percent) of all mayoral candidates are women. When looking at the gender composition of *gamgebeli* candidates, the gender gap widens; 10 out of 261 of candidates are women, which is less than 4 percent.

In Tbilisi, candidates nominated by party lists are in greater gender balance than candidates competing for majoritarian *sakrebulo* seats. The distribution of women and men in party lists, at the time of publication, is approximately 38 percent to 62 percent, with 427 female and 702 male candidates out of 1,129. However, the proportion of women candidates competing for Tbilisi's majoritarian seats is only 21 percent, with 66 female and 242 male candidates out of 308.

Statistics and the breakdown of candidates by gender for the local self-government by election district can be found on the CEC website.

---

<sup>23</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Election Observation Mission Final Report – Presidential Elections, 27 October 2013*. Accessed online April 2014 from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/110301?download=true>.

## Are there incentives for parties to nominate women?

As part of the package of recent amendments to the Law on Political Unions of Citizens, there is now a provision to provide financial incentives to political parties that include three women for every 10 candidates on the party lists for *sakrebulo* seats.<sup>24</sup> This measure was increased from two in every 10 candidates on the lists during the 2012 parliamentary elections.

Incentivizing the inclusion of women on party lists may not be enough to ensure greater gender equality. The International Society for Fair Elections' Second Interim Report (published May 15) identified "gross gender inequality among candidates currently nominated by political parties," stating in a press release that "there is virtually no representation of women candidates."<sup>25</sup>

In both the 2012 parliamentary elections and 2013 presidential elections, there was an increase in the number of female candidates. The increase in women in parliament from 6.6 percent to approximately 12 percent following the 2012 parliamentary elections marked a twofold increase in women's parliamentary seats in one election cycle. Moreover, the 2013 presidential elections saw female candidate Nino Burjanadze secure 10 percent of the popular vote.

---

<sup>24</sup> The text of the law does not mention women explicitly, but rather specifies that incentives are for parties that include three candidates of a different gender from the other seven within a party list of 10. However, this law was designed with the goal of increasing women's political representation. For more, please see: <http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2014/NDI-PreElectionDelegation-StatementMay2-2014.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy. "June 15, 2014 Local Self-Government Elections: Pre-Election Monitoring Second Interim Report (April 20-May 11)." Page 3. Published May 15, 2014. <http://www.isfed.ge/main/607/eng/>.

## Resources

- Constitution of Georgia ([English](#))
  - Election Code of Georgia ([English](#))
  - Law on Political Unions of Citizens ([English](#))
  - Criminal Code of Georgia ([English](#))
- Central Election Commission ([English](#), [Georgian](#), [Russian](#))
  - Central Election Commission Regulations ([English](#))
  - Election Code of Georgia ([English](#))
  - Schedule of Electoral Activities ([English](#))
  - Central Election Commission Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#))
  - Central Election Commission Midterm Report on Activities to Simplify Electoral Processes for Voters with Disabilities ([English](#))
  - Central Election Commission Gender Statistics for the 2014 Municipal Elections ([English](#))
  - Election Results ([Georgian](#))
- State Audit Office of Georgia ([English](#))
- International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) ([English](#), [Georgian](#))
  - First Interim Report of the June 15, 2014 Local Self-Government Elections ([English](#))
  - Second Interim Report of the June 15, 2014 Local Self-Government Elections ([English](#), [Georgian](#))
- International Center for Civic Culture (ICCC) ([English](#))
  - Voter Information Website ivote.ge: Everything about Elections ([English](#), [Georgian](#))
- Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) ([English](#))
  - Voter Information Website partiebi.ge ([English](#), [Georgian](#), [Armenian](#), [Azerbaijani](#))