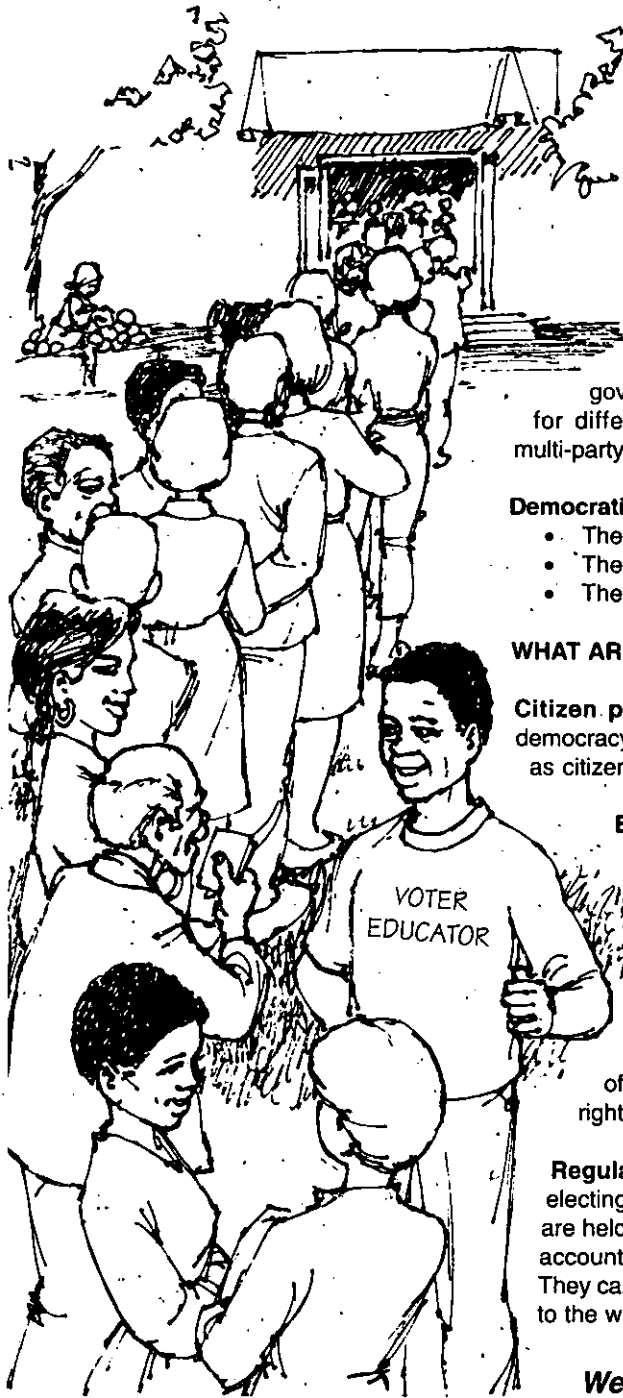


Date Printed: 04/23/2009

JTS Box Number: IFES_72
Tab Number: 37
Document Title: Election 99: Your vote, your right
Document Date: 1999
Document Country: South Africa
Document Language: English
IFES ID: CE01784



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Millions of South Africans voted in April 1994 for a new democracy. On 2 June 1999 South Africans will again go to the polls to elect a government for another five years. For those who qualify to vote, voting in elections is now a right. It is also a responsibility for those who wish to protect and defend the new Constitution.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy means rule of the people. Political democracy is a system where the people decide by voting who is going to govern them. It is also a system where the powers of government are controlled by a constitution. Democracy provides for different views to be expressed through political parties in a multi-party system.

Democratic government is a government that respects:

- The right of the majority to govern a country;
- The right of minorities to participate;
- The right of all individuals to enjoy their freedoms.

WHAT ARE THE KEY FEATURES OF DEMOCRACY?

Citizen participation: Participation is the key role of citizens in a democracy. It is not only the right of citizens to participate, but their duty as citizens to build a better democratic country.

Equality: All people are equal in the eyes of the law. No individual or group may discriminate against another. Human rights apply to all.

Rule of law: All people in the country are subject to the same known laws. They must respect and obey those laws.

Political tolerance: All people now have the freedom to hold and express their own views. They must also respect the right of others to hold different views. They must respect everyone's right to belong to a political party of their own choice.

Regular, free and fair elections: Citizens express their views by electing officials to represent them in government. Regular elections are held to give new mandates. Elected officials know they will be held accountable for the decisions they make and the actions they take. They can be removed from office in the next election if they do not listen to the will of the people.

We, the South African people, are responsible for protecting our own democracy.

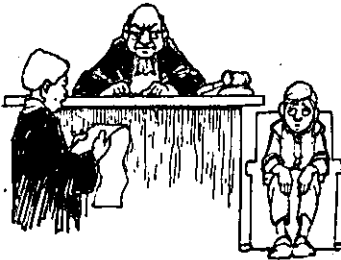
DEMOCRACY, THE CONSTITUTION, AND ELECTIONS

On 10 December 1996, South Africa adopted a new democratic constitution. This constitution is the highest law of the country. It describes how the government is to be formed, how it is elected, and how it functions. The Constitution establishes citizens' rights and responsibilities.

The **BILL OF RIGHTS** in the Constitution sets out the human rights and freedoms that are protected by law.

The Constitution establishes three branches of government, independent of each other:

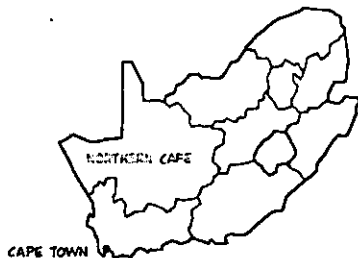
1. **LEGISLATURE:** The law-making body of Parliament.
2. **EXECUTIVE:** Implements laws and policies.
3. **JUDICIARY:** Enforces the Constitution and laws through the courts.



The Constitution also recognises the role played by **TRADITIONAL LEADERS** in communities and provides for their continuation in terms of customary law. Traditional leaders, like all citizens in a democracy, have to obey the Constitution and all laws passed by the government.

The Constitution creates three levels of government, each with its own structures and functions:

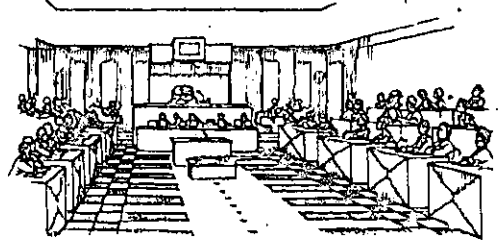
1. **NATIONAL** (the entire country)
2. **PROVINCIAL** (each province, eg: Northern Cape)
3. **LOCAL** (each town, eg: Cape Town)



WHAT ARE POLITICAL RIGHTS?

POLITICAL RIGHTS provide that every citizen is free to make political choices, including the right:

- To form a political party.
- To participate in the activities of or recruit members for a political party.
- To campaign for a political party or cause.



WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

A **POLITICAL PARTY** is a formally organised group of people sharing common political policy preferences over a wide range of issues. Political parties should:

- Democratically formulate policies and programmes, on the basis of the priorities and wishes of their constituencies or members;
- Represent their members regarding those policies and programmes;
- Recruit and train future political leaders;
- Inform the public of their views on current issues.

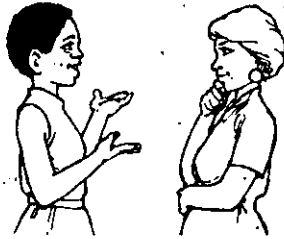


THE POLITICAL RIGHT TO VOTE:

- Every citizen has the right to free, fair and regular elections for any legislative body established in the Constitution.
- Every citizen who is 18 years or older has the right to vote in elections;
- Every citizen has the right to vote in secrecy;
- Every citizen has the right to stand for public office and, if elected, to hold office.

WHAT IS AN ELECTION?

In a democracy, an election is to choose by a secret vote. Elections are one of the key features of a democracy.



WHAT IS A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION?

Democratic elections must be:

- **Competitive:** Political parties must enjoy the freedom to voice their criticisms of the government and other parties openly, and to place alternative policies and candidates before the voters.
- **Periodic:** Regular elections at fixed intervals will let elected officials know they have a limited amount of time to show that they can deliver. If they do not deliver, they can be voted out of office.
- **Inclusive:** As large a proportion of the eligible adult population as possible should cast their vote.
- **Definitive:** The elections must have a certain and clear outcome.

WHY ARE DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IMPORTANT?

Democratic elections provide for peaceful competition for power and authority. They provide regular opportunities for people to change or re-elect their governments. They provide the peace and stability necessary for development to take place.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS?

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), established by the Constitution, was set up in 1997 to manage all elections and referenda in the country. The IEC is independent and non-partisan. This means that it must not favour any political party, whether in government or in opposition. The IEC is responsible for ensuring that elections are FREE AND FAIR.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS?

Elections are **FREE** if:

- Constitutional freedoms of movement, speech, assembly and association are respected;
- People are free from fear in connection with the election and the electoral campaign, eg. no intimidation of voters takes place;
- There are no barriers to standing for election;
- Eligible voters are allowed to register and to vote;
- There is freedom of choice, with no bribery or corruption;
- People are able to file complaints through the legal system when their rights and freedoms are abused or the electoral law is broken.

Elections are **FAIR** if:

- The electoral process is transparent;
- The electoral law, regulations and system as a whole grant no special privileges to any political party or social group;
- There is an independent and impartial electoral commission;
- Eligible voters are given adequate opportunity to be included in the voters' roll;
- Voter education programmes are impartial;
- The media reports impartially on the election process and results;
- All participants in the election campaign observe the Electoral Code of Conduct;
- The ballot is secret;
- Voters are given the necessary information and impartial assistance to cast their vote;
- The voting and counting logistics and procedures are properly planned and carried out;
- Reasonable access is given to voting and counting stations for representatives of political parties, accredited local and international observers, and the media;
- Complaints are impartially and quickly dealt with;
- The election results are accepted by everyone involved.

TO BE DEMOCRATIC, ELECTIONS MUST BE BOTH FREE AND FAIR.

WHEN WILL THE NEXT ELECTIONS BE HELD?

The next elections will be in 2000 for local government. National and provincial elections will be held again after five years, in 2004.

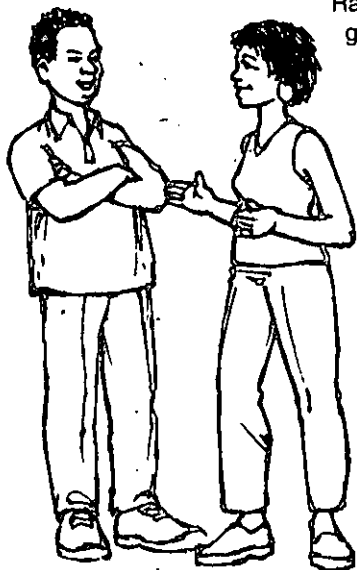


WHAT IS A BY-ELECTION?

A by-election is a special election which is held to replace an elected representative who has died, resigned or was removed from office for any other reason.

Rather than waiting for the next general elections, it is important to ensure that the people in that area have a new representative to protect their interests. In South Africa, by-elections are only used for local government because those are the only ones in which representatives are elected from specific constituencies rather than on the basis of proportional representation.

When an elected official at national or provincial levels dies, resigns or is removed from office, his or her political party appoints a replacement to take over until the next general election.



WHAT IS A REFERENDUM?

A referendum is held when a political or policy question is referred to the people for a direct decision by a vote. The question requires a **Yes** or **No** answer.

BUT, DEMOCRACY MEANS MORE THAN JUST VOTING IN ELECTIONS... RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS CAN PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE BETWEEN ELECTIONS IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS:

Take individual action by asking your elected representative questions about the issues which worry you.

Hold public servants and elected representatives accountable for what they say and do by attending forums and open meetings and asking questions.

Promote tolerance and protect constitutional freedoms.

Build strong communities which work together to solve problems and develop themselves.

Pay your income taxes and rates for services.

Do not do crime. Fight crime and corruption wherever you find it.

Take group action via civil society organisations by encouraging an appropriate organisation to which you belong to take a public stand on an issue which is of concern to that organisation.

Take group action via political parties by encouraging your political party to take a position on an issue which is important to your community or the country.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM OR NEED FURTHER INFORMATION, YOU SHOULD ASK FOR HELP FROM:

- The election officer in your local authority or
- The IEC office in your provincial capital or
- The Co-operative for Research and Education (CORE) which produced this leaflet.



Write to CORE at
P.O. Box 42440, Fordsburg,
South Africa, 2033.
call us at (011) 836-9943, send us a
fax at (011) 836-9944, or send us an
e-mail at corejhb@wn.apc.org



WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE 1999 ELECTIONS?

Any South African citizen who is 18 years or older, who is in possession of a green bar-coded ID, or a temporary ID, or a temporary registration certificate issued by the Department of Home Affairs, and who has registered to vote.

WHAT IS VOTER REGISTRATION?

Voter registration builds a record of all the citizens of South Africa who are entitled to vote in an election.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF REGISTRATION?

Registration prevents those who might wish to cheat and vote more than once from doing so. It also equalises the vote as it allows the IEC to create voting districts of about the same size. The IEC is able to save the government money by targeting its resources effectively.

IS IT COMPULSORY TO REGISTER AS A VOTER?

Voter registration is voluntary, so it is not compulsory to register. This means that each citizen can choose whether to register or not. If you decide not to register, you are depriving yourself of the right to vote and to have a say in the country's future. But being registered does not mean that you have to vote. Even after you have registered, you can still decide whether you want to vote or not.

WHERE SHOULD YOU REGISTER?

You can only register in one voting district. Depending on where you expect to be on election day, you should register in that district.

WHAT IS A VOTERS' ROLL?

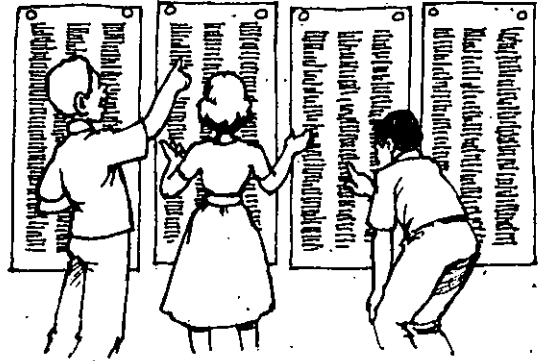
A voters' roll is a list of all the names, addresses and identification numbers of those who are registered and therefore entitled to vote. In 1999, the voters' roll will be compiled on a national basis so that every voter's name appears once on a computerised list, ensuring that each voter can only vote once in any election. Each voter will be allocated to a specific voting district.



WHY IS THE VOTERS' ROLL IMPORTANT?

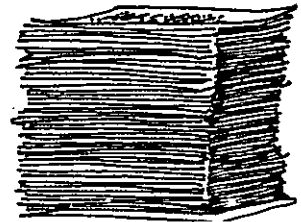
Before election day, you should check if your name appears on the voters' roll where you wish to vote on 2 June 1999. If your name does not appear, go to your local authority and register again. The last place you register at is the place where you will be allowed to vote in 1999.

On election day, each voting station will have available the voters' roll for its voting district in order to check the voters' names when they arrive to vote. If your name is **not** on the roll, you will **not** be allowed to vote in that district.



WHY DO WE NEED TO CHECK THE VOTERS' ROLL?

Once the IEC has prepared the preliminary voters' roll, it will be published and displayed so that you can make certain that your registration has been properly processed and that your name, address and identification number appear correctly on the list. By checking the roll, you can also be sure that you have been assigned to the voting district in which you wish to vote.



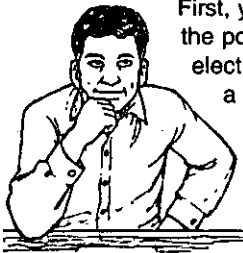
WHAT ELECTORAL SYSTEM DO WE USE?

Winners in a democratic election can be identified using two main systems:

1. **First past the post:** Whoever gets the most votes is declared the winner.
2. **Proportional representation:** After all the votes are counted, the parties are allocated a number of seats on the basis of their share of the vote.

In South Africa, we follow the proportional representation system. So, candidates on their party list will be elected if their party wins a certain percentage of votes. The candidates are nominated by the party structures and placed on national or provincial lists in order of preference determined by the party. Proportional representation means that once the votes are counted, political parties will be given seats in the national and provincial legislature on the basis of the total percentage of votes they received. So, the candidates at the top of their lists will be the first to get seats, and some of those on the bottom of the lists (depending how long the lists are) may not get seats at all even if their party gets many votes.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO VOTE FOR?



First, you need to understand what each of the political parties stands for. In an election campaign, each party will publish a document which lays out its policy positions on important issues. By studying their platforms, and other campaign materials, you can see which party judges problems the way you do and takes positions which are closest to your own.

Second, you need to judge what each party has actually done. Sometimes parties promise more than they can deliver. So, you should look at their actual achievements. You need to ask whether the promises they are making in this election seem realistic.

Third, you need to examine who each of the parties has nominated as candidates on their lists. You need to decide which of the parties has nominated the kind of people you think will best represent you and your needs. You need to look at the candidates carefully to see whether they deserve to be in positions of power.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT OUR VOTE IS SECRET?

The Constitution guarantees a secret ballot. The IEC is responsible for setting up the voting process and the station layout in a way which ensures that nobody can know for whom you have voted. Electoral officials, political parties and civil society observers, as well as all voters, must adhere to the Electoral Code of Conduct. This Code also provides for the **secrecy of your vote**. You do not have to tell anyone else how you voted.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO ON ELECTION DAY?

When you arrive at the voting station, you will wait in a queue. You should not have to wait as long as some people did in 1994. You must bring your ID document and voter registration receipt or sticker with you. Present these to the voting officials. They will check your name and ID number on the voters' roll. Then, they will give you two ballot papers — one national and one provincial.

With your two ballot papers, you should go to the voting booth where nobody can see who you vote for. Make one cross on each ballot paper next to the party of your choice. You can vote for the same party on both ballots, or you can even split your vote. You can vote for one party on the national ballot and a different party on the provincial ballot. This will depend on the issues that you have decided are important to you and which party best represents your views.

When you have finished making your cross, fold each of your ballot papers. Go to the ballot boxes. The ballot boxes will be marked national or provincial, or they will be colour-coded. Place your national ballot in the national ballot box and your provincial ballot in the provincial ballot box.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH VOTING?

You should ask a voting official to assist you. They cannot tell you who to vote for, but can only help you / show you how to mark your ballots. Political party representatives and observers are not allowed to help you. Nobody must tell you who you should vote for. If this happens, report it immediately to the official in charge of the voting station.