



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

August 7th, 2024

Attention All Editors

For Immediate Release

EBC STEPS TO ADDRESS ISSUES CONCERNING APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICERS

The Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) today clarified its position on the selection of Returning Officers in response to recent media reports.

During a workshop on “Enhancing Ethical and Effective Coverage” on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, EBC Chairman Mr. Mark Ramkerrysingh addressed a question raised about potential political affiliations of Returning Officers.

The EBC has received allegations from various political parties about Returning Officers being members of political parties. To address these concerns and safeguard the integrity of the electoral process, the Commission sought legal advice on requiring applicants for the position of Returning Officer to declare whether they are a member of a political party.

The legal opinion confirmed that such an inquiry is both advisable and lawful. It distinguishes between declaring whether one is a member of a political party and disclosing voting preferences, which is protected by the principle of secret ballot. Membership in a political party implies a level of allegiance or affiliation that could potentially create the perception of bias or apparent bias.

The EBC emphasizes its commitment to impartiality and transparency in the electoral process. Requiring applicants to declare their membership is a proactive step to mitigate potential conflicts of interest and maintain public confidence in the electoral system.

The Commission would like to clarify that recent media reports suggesting that the EBC is asking Returning Officers to declare their political allegiance are misleading and inaccurate. The focus remains on ensuring that the electoral process is free, fair, and credible.

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