

GECOM Implements Strict Measures to Safeguard Ballot Secrecy and Prevent Vote Selling

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – August 19, 2025 – The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has, as a matter of policy, decided to introduce a comprehensive set of measures to prohibit the use of cell phones within polling stations for the September 1, 2025 General and Regional Elections.

This decisive action is aimed at protecting the sanctity and secrecy of the ballot, particularly to address existing concerns regarding the potential for vote selling that is directly linked to photographing of ballots. The prohibition on cell phone use and the penalties for vote selling are rooted in the Representation of the People Act, Cap. 1:03.

Considering that the integrity of the electoral process is of crucial importance, the new measures are designed to ensure that every citizen can cast their vote freely and without undue influence, and that the secrecy of their choice is absolutely protected.

As a consequence of the Commission's decision, the following measures will be implemented to enforce the prohibition of the use of cell phones in Polling Stations: -

Posting of a clear and prominent notice by the entrance and within every Polling Station explicitly stating, pictorially and in words, that the use of cell phones is strictly prohibited.

Regular announcement to all voters in the queue by polling day officials, informing them to turn off their cell phones before entering the polling station. Every voter will be reminded of the need to turn off his/her cell phone before he/she is given the ballot to vote.

The National ID Card or valid Guyana Passport or Driver's Licence as the case may be, of every voter will be retained by the Presiding Officer at the point of the issuing of the ballot and returned after the voter has completed the voting process.

Voting compartments will be strategically positioned to allow GECOM staff and accredited Party Agents to observe if a voter is attempting to use his/her phone to take a photo of his/her ballot. This observation will be respectful of voter privacy while maintaining vigilance against the use of cell phones in Polling Stations.

In the event that a voter is observed attempting to photograph his/her ballot, GECOM staff and/or Party Agents will immediately raise an alarm to prevent the action. Any voter observed taking a photograph of



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his/her ballot paper will result in a formal note being made of the incident, and a report will be immediately submitted to the Guyana Police Force for investigation.

A designated desk or table will be placed next to each voting compartment where voters will be instructed to place their cell phones before using the voting compartment to cast their vote. This will provide a visible location for phones, by all concerned, during the voting process.

GECOM officials will instruct every voter to place their phones on a designated desk/table before proceeding to the voting compartment. This instruction will be clear and consistently applied to all voters.

The Commission's decision aligns with international best practices for election administration, which often include provisions to protect ballot secrecy and prevent electoral fraud. In this regard, collaboration with the Guyana Police Force underscores the seriousness with which electoral offenses are viewed and the commitment to rigorous enforcement.

It is imperative to understand that the selling of a vote constitutes a serious electoral offence which carries significant penalties. Offenders found guilty of selling their vote are liable to a fine of sixty-five thousand Guyana Dollars (G\$65,000) and imprisonment for a term of six (6) months.

The Commission urges all voters to cooperate with these new measures, specifically because they are crucial for upholding the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. GECOM is committed to upholding the principles of free and fair elections and will take all necessary steps to prosecute those who attempt to undermine the democratic process.



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