

APPENDIX: BELIZE

DEMOGRAPHICS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Belize is a parliamentary democracy with a population of approximately 300,000.¹ In the last general election, 156,993 people were registered to vote,² representing 97% of the voting age population.³ 77.2% of registered voters turned out to vote.⁴

Two government bodies oversee the administration of elections, the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the Elections and Boundaries Department. There are 29 electoral divisions in the country.⁵ While the Elections and Boundaries Commission oversees redistricting, the Elections and Boundaries Department, headed by the chief elections officer, is responsible for the day-to-day administration of all phases of elections, including the compilation of voter lists for each election division.⁶ The Department has one central office, ten branch offices, and three sub-offices around the country.

VOTER REGISTRATION

It is the responsibility of voting eligible individuals to initiate their voter registrations.⁷ Similarly, individuals are expected to inform election officials of any changes in their voter information. Voter lists are created for each electoral division and compiled at the national level. Belize also requires individuals to re-register every ten years.

Adding New Voters

Eligible citizens must register in person before an election official at one of the twelve district offices that the Elections and Boundaries Department maintains around the country.⁸ New voters must provide proof of identity in the form of a birth certificate, passport, or naturalization certificate;⁹ a completed registration application;¹⁰ and have their photo taken for a voter ID card.¹¹

New registrants are placed on a temporary list called a “supplementary list” that is prepared each monthly local election officials. This list is posted in local election offices for a 10-day public inspection period during which individuals can lodge objections to the new registrations.¹² Upon completion of this inspection period at the end of each month, the supplementary list is certified, and a “revised list” is prepared, which is also then posted in registration offices for public inspection.¹³ Voter ID cards are issued to individuals whose names appear on the revised list, and their names are added to the divisional voter list.¹⁴ Registration record cards are filed in a binder that is stored in each division’s registration office.¹⁵

Updating Existing Voter Entries

Name changes, address changes, corrections of errors, and removals of deceased or disqualified voters are processed monthly. There is also an annual revision in October of each year.¹⁶

Changes of address, as well as name changes, must be self-reported by individuals on a prescribed form that is submitted to election officials.¹⁷ If a voter has moved within the same electoral division, her change of address will be entered into the voter roll within a month's time. Local election officials simply record the change on the electoral division's voter list and notify national election officials of the change so that it can also be reflected in the national voter list.¹⁸ Local election officials will also mail the voter a notice confirming the update to her registration information.¹⁹

Inter-division address changes are processed slightly differently. A registered voter who moves to a new electoral division must submit a change of address form to her the new local election office. An official there will then contact her old election office to arrange for the voter's registration record to be transferred from the old office to the new one.²⁰ Local election officials also notify national election officials of the address update, so that the change can be reflected in the national voter list. The national election agency also sends the voter a written notice that her voter registration record will be transferred from one district to another unless she objects.²¹

The names of deceased or disqualified voters, and duplicate registrations are removed periodically throughout the year.²² Voters may be disqualified and removed from the voter list if they are: (1) less than 18 years old; (2) serving a prison sentence longer than 12 months; (3) serving a death sentence; (4) certified insane; (5) registered more than once.²³ When election officials identify duplicate registrations, a notice is sent to the voter informing her that unless she objects within 14 days, her duplicate entry on the voter list will be removed.²⁴

Annual Revision

Although revisions are made to division voter lists continuously during the year, Belize conducts a nationwide revision during October and November of each year.

During this revision period, local election officials are required to make public a list of voters who they intend to remove from the voter rolls on the ground that the voter died or became ineligible to vote during the previous year.²⁵ Voters have approximately one month to review this list and notify their local election official of potential errors.²⁶

Local election officials are also required to hold public meetings during this period to hear and make determinations on objections to listings on the voter list.²⁷ A revised voter list is certified at the end of the revision period and becomes the official voter list for the electoral division.²⁸

Re-registration

Since 1997, Belize has required voters to re-register every ten years.²⁹ Re-registration in urban areas is generally conducted at polling stations. In villages and rural areas, re-registration is conducted at locations selected by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.³⁰

Election officials are authorized to conduct an enumeration of all or part of an election division to complete the re-registration process.³¹ Enumerators may collect completed registration forms from eligible individuals and leave blank registration forms for residents who are not home at the time of their visit.³² A registration officer may also ask the “chief occupant” of each household to report the names of every voting eligible resident for registration purposes.³³

FILLING GAPS AND CORRECTING INACCURACIES IN THE ROLLS

As mentioned above, each month, local election officials prepare a list of proposed changes to the voter rolls; the list reflects all new registration applications received the previous month, as well as all address changes and other updates. The list is posted in the local election office for 10 days, during which voters may submit corrections or objections.³⁴

All appeals and objections are reviewed at the end of each month by an administrative body known as “revision court,” which is composed of local officials.³⁵ At the conclusion of revision court, registration officials are provided with a list of approved modifications, which they incorporate into the official voter roll.³⁶

Every voter registration transaction is acknowledged by a registration officer who is required to give the voter who initiated the transaction a receipt.³⁷

PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Election officials in each electoral division are required to make the original voter list available for inspection during office hours by registered voters only.³⁸ With prior permission from the chief elections officer, and under supervision, political party representatives can review registration records kept at the national election agency office.³⁹

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¹ Estimated for July 2009. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook—Belize, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bh.html> (last updated May 14, 2009).

² Elections & Boundaries Department, Belize General Elections & Referendum 2008, http://results.belize-elections.org/final_results/final_results.php [hereinafter 2008 General Election Results].

³ The voting age population as of mid-2006. Elections & Boundaries Department, Electors by Division and Sex as at January 2008, http://www.belize-elections.org/stats_2008/div_sex_jan.html.

⁴ 2008 General Election Results, *supra* note 2.

⁵ Elections & Boundaries Department, *Boundary Redistricting* (Jan. 2004), available at http://www.belize-elections.org/boundary_redistricting.pdf.

⁶ Elections & Boundaries Department, About Elections and Boundaries, http://belize-elections.org/about_us.html (last updated Sept. 2005).

⁷ Generally, eligible individuals are at least 18 years old, are citizens of Belize, and have lived in an electoral division for at least two months. Eligibility is also extended to Commonwealth citizens who have lived in Belize for at least one year, or any Commonwealth citizen who is domiciled in Belize. Representation of the People Act, ch. 9 § 5 (2000) (Belize).

⁸ Elections & Boundaries Department, Voter Registration, http://belize-elections.org/voter_registration.html [hereinafter Voter Registration FAQ]. An individual must reside in an electoral division for a minimum of two months before registering to vote. Myrtle Palacio, Chief Elections Officer, Elections and Boundaries Department, *A Framework for Voter Education*, at 37 (Jan. 2004), available at http://intra.governmentofbelize.gov.bz/document_archives/17.pdf. A flow chart of the registration process is available on the Elections and Boundaries Department website at: http://www.belize-elections.org/select_leaders.htm#10. If it is considered appropriate, and if required by the chief elections officer, registration officers may conduct an enumeration of all or part of their respective election divisions to encourage voter registration. Representation of the People Registration Rules § 31(2) (Belize) [hereinafter ROP Registration Rules].

⁹ If an individual does not possess one of the three forms of acceptable identity documentation, there is a fail-safe whereby these individuals may provide information to the General Registry or the Immigration Department to verify their identities and register to vote. *Id.* § 31(1).

¹⁰ The voter registration application form requires the voter's name, occupation, address, length of residence in the election division, date and place of birth, height, eye color, and skin color. Representation of the People Act, sched. 5, form 6A.

¹¹ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8. The voter card is not required to vote. Palacio, *supra* note 8, at 32-33.

¹² Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8. See also ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 32. The inspection period lasts from the 10th to the 25th of each month. For the administrative purposes of preparing the monthly supplementary lists, voter registration is technically “closed” on the 10th of each month.

¹³ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8. See also ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 38.

¹⁴ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8. See also ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 44(4).

¹⁵ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 35. The chief elections officer also maintains duplicate copies of registration record cards and voter ID cards in his office. *Id.* § 21.

¹⁶ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8.

¹⁷ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, §§ 58, 60. Copies of the required forms are available at: Representation of the People Act, sched. 5, forms 17, 18.

¹⁸ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 58(4)(a)-(b).

¹⁹ *Id.* § 58(4)(c).

²⁰ *Id.* § 59(1).

- ²¹ *Id.* § 59(5). Inter-division address changes are only processed during the July and August monthly revisions.
- ²² Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8. See also ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 47(1).
- ²³ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8.
- ²⁴ *Id.* See also ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 67(2)-(5).
- ²⁵ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 47(2). The posting of the list must include a statement of the registration officer's intention to remove those voters from the division voter list.
- ²⁶ *Id.* § 47(3).
- ²⁷ *Id.* § 49. The division revising officer is required to provide six days advance public notice of the meeting. *Id.* § 49(1). Determinations must be made by November 25th. *Id.* § 49(3).
- ²⁸ *Id.* § 50.
- ²⁹ Representation of the People Act, ch. 9 § 9. The Governor General sets the date by which eligible individuals must be registered. ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 4(1). The chief elections officer then publishes a notice requiring all eligible individuals to register by the established date. *Id.* § 4(2). A copy of the form of this notice is appears at: Representation of the People Act, sched. 5, form 5.
- ³⁰ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 8(1).
- ³¹ *Id.* § 6.
- ³² *Id.* § 6(7). Individuals who register before an enumerator must provide the same documentation requested of individuals through the regular process of appearing before a registration officer. *Id.* § 9(1)-(2). A fail-safe exists for individuals who do not possess the required identity documentation. *Id.* § 9(3). Official photographers are required to be present where registration occurs, including accompanying enumerators house-to-house, to take the necessary photos of voters for voter ID cards. *Id.* § 8(2).
- ³³ *Id.* § 7(1). "Chief occupant" is defined as "the person who is responsible for the payment of rent from the entire house to the landlord if such house is a rented house or the person who owns that house; or any person who for the time being is in charge of the house." *Id.* § 7(2).
- ³⁴ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8.
- ³⁵ Voter Registration FAQ, *supra* note 8; ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, §§ 38-41. Revision court must be completed by the 5th of the following month. *Id.* § 39.
- ³⁶ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, §§ 43, 45. Within 48 hours of receipt of the revising officer's list, the division registration officer must certify it and forward a copy to the chief elections officer. *Id.* § 44(1)-(2).
- ³⁷ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 74. A copy of the receipt appears at: Representation of the People Act, sched. 5, form 6B.
- ³⁸ ROP Registration Rules, *supra* note 8, § 71(1).
- ³⁹ *Id.* § 71(2).