

**ANDHRA PRADESH STATE ELECTION COMMISSION**  
**L-Block, Secretariat, Hyderabad – 500 022.**

**C I R C U L A R**

**No.209/SEC-B2/2017**

**Date: 27.11.2017**

Sub: Elections – Ordinary elections to Gram Panchayats – Appointment of Returning Officers and Polling Personnel – Instructions – Issued.

Ref: APSEC Notification No.207/SEC-B2/2017, dated 27.11.2017.

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Ordinary elections to Gram Panchayats in the State are to be held before expiry of the term of existing bodies on 01.08.2018. Selection, appointment of Returning Officers / Assistant Returning Officers and Polling personnel is a crucial task in election process and advance action is required to be taken to ensure smooth conduct of elections. Orders were issued in the reference cited on appointment of administrative machinery for conduct of Panchayat elections. The following further instructions are issued for selection and appointment of ROs / AROs and Polling Personnel in connection with ordinary elections to Gram Panchayats.

**1. APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICERS/ASSISTANT RETURNING OFFICERS:-**

For every election to fill the seats of Members and Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat, the District Election Authority shall appoint a Returning Officer for one or more Gram Panchayats, who shall be an officer of the State Government or a local authority.

The District Election Authority may appoint, one or more persons, as Assistant Returning Officers to assist any Returning Officer. Provided that, every such person shall be an Officer of the State Government or of a local authority.

Every Assistant Returning Officer shall, subject to the control of the Returning Officer, be competent to perform all or any of the functions of the Returning Officer:

Provided that no Assistant Returning Officer shall perform any functions of the Returning Officer, which relate to the scrutiny of nominations, unless the Returning Officer is unavoidably prevented from performing the said function.

As there are large number of Gram Panchayats in every district and suitable officers may not be available in adequate number for appointment of exclusive Returning Officer for each Gram Panchayat, the State Election Commission is permitting to divide the election process in two stages and appoint one Returning Officer for a group of Gram Panchayats for Stage-I, but for Stage-II, an exclusive Returning Officer will have to be appointed for each Gram Panchayat.

The election process starting from the stage of publication of election notice and ending with the publication of list of contesting candidates for Members and Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat and allotment of symbols to them is called Stage-I. The election process comprising of all subsequent items of work such as, finalisation of polling arrangements, distribution of ballot papers, polling, counting of votes, declaration of results, issue of election certificate, conduct of special meeting for election of Upa-Sarpanch etc., is called Stage-II.

The District Election Authority or Officer authorised by him, may appoint Returning Officers as indicated below:

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- 1) For a group of 2 to 4 contiguous minor Gram Panchayats (having less than 10,000 population each), one Returning Officer may be appointed to perform election process comprising in Stage-I and a separate Returning Officer for each Gram Panchayat may be appointed for Stage-II. As far as possible, Gazetted Officers shall be appointed as Returning Officers (Stage-I). The Officer of the rank of Superintendent may be appointed as Returning Officer (Stage-II).
- 2) In respect of single major Gram Panchayat having a population of not less than 10,000, an exclusive Returning Officer, preferably a Gazetted Officer, may be appointed to perform the functions comprising in both Stage-I and Stage-II.

Besides Returning Officers, the District Election Authority has the discretion to appoint one or more Assistant Returning Officers for any Gram Panchayat, depending on the necessity.

It is suggested that for Stage-I election process, when the Returning Officer is appointed for a group of Panchayats, he should be given the assistance of one or two Assistant Returning Officers, depending on the necessity. The Assistant Returning Officer can be appointed from the Senior Assistant or equivalent categories. The appointment orders for Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers be issued in format given at **Annexure-I**.

The Collector and District Election Authority may either himself issue the orders for appointment of the Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers or he may authorise the Revenue Divisional Officers/Sub-Collectors concerned, who are also the Deputy District Election Authorities to do this work.

## **2. TRAINING OF RETURNING OFFICERS:**

The Returning Officers have to perform very vital functions during the Gram Panchayat Elections and the entire election process of the Gram Panchayat will be completed under their supervision and control. It is, therefore, necessary to impart adequate training to the Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers. The State Election Commission will be supplying booklets containing "Instructions to the Returning Officers". Besides these instructions, they should be thoroughly acquainted with the various provisions of the A.P. Panchayat Raj Act and Rules relating to the conduct of elections to the Gram Panchayats.

## **3. APPOINTMENT OF POLLING PERSONNEL:**

The appointment of polling personnel may be issued by the District Election Authority himself or he may authorise the Deputy District Election Authority i.e. Revenue Divisional Officers / Sub-Collectors or any other person or suitable officer to issue these appointment orders.

### **A. Obtaining Lists of Polling Personnel:**

- (a) The District Election Authority shall work out the requirement of polling personnel by adding 20 percent in excess of their requirement so as to keep certain personnel in reserve and also to meet any contingency.
- (b) As more number of polling personnel will be required for the conduct of elections, all the gazetted and non-gazetted Government servants shall be drafted as election personnel. The District election Authority should in no case exempt any individual, except under extraordinary circumstances when the employee substantiates his plea for exemption with documentary evidence.

- (c) All the District Election Authorities or officers authorized by them should take necessary action to obtain Mandal-wise database of all eligible polling personnel and shall maintain it in electronic format, which can facilitate computerized randomization. All relevant particulars like Name, Gender, contact no (Mobile), Designation, office and department/ institution, Place of residence, work place, Native Mandal shall be entered in the Database.
- (d) The database shall contain, distinctly and separately, the State Govt. employees including employees working on honorarium and Public Sector Undertakings, Statutory Corporations, Aided School Employees etc., who can be employed as polling personnel.
- (e) Similarly the database shall distinctly and separately contain all Central Govt. employees including PSU, Bank, etc.
- (f)
  - (i) While drafting Presiding Officers/Polling Officers, the availability of female Polling Personnel should be examined for appointing one Presiding/Polling Officer in each Polling Station who may attend to the duty of identification of woman electors.
  - (ii) Presiding Officers and Polling Officers shall be classified on the basis of scale of pay attached to their post and rank. As far as practicable, Gazetted Officers shall be deployed as Presiding Officers. If sufficient Gazetted Officers are not available, the officials who are working in supervisory capacity and school Assistants should be deployed as Presiding Officers. The Presiding Officer should be of higher scale/grade in comparison to other polling officers of that formation.
- (g) Necessary arrangements shall be made at polling stations for overnight stay of employees, particularly women employees drafted for poll duty.

**B. Exempted Categories:**

The Commission has exempted certain officers from being drafted for election duty in view of essential nature of duties/service discharged by them.

- (a) The officers and staff of following departments will not be requisitioned for deployment of election duty –
  - (i) Judicial officers of all cadres.
  - (ii) Doctors and Compounders working in veterinary hospitals.
  - (iii) Doctors, Nurses, ANMs working in Health Dept.
  - (iv) Staff of All India Radio.
  - (v) Staff of Doordarshan
  - (vi) Ayurvedic, Unani & Homeopathic Medical Officers of Ayush Dept.
  - (vii) Officers and staff engaged in maintenance of essential services like electricity, water supply, etc.
- (b) The operational/technical staff of BSNL, MTNL will be requisitioned for election duty only in unavoidable circumstances.
- (c) Officer/staff of Commercial Bank located in rural area and if happens to be a single officer branch, need not be deployed.
- (d) All such women, who are in advanced stage of pregnancy, whether on maternity leave or not, or who are otherwise on medical advice not fit for any rigorous, hazardous work, shall be exempted from election duty. The same will apply to women who are breastfeeding a newly born child.

**C. Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers & Polling Officers:**

In Gram Panchayat Elections, if the voters in a Ward exceeds 650, two Polling Stations will be set up in that Ward and the voters will be divided equally between the two polling stations without dividing voters of a family. Similarly, if the voters in a Ward exceeds 1300, an additional polling station may be set up for every 650 voters without dividing voters in a family.

A polling party going to a Polling Station will consist of one Presiding Officer and one, two or three Polling Officers, depending on the number of voters in a Polling Station. The following scale may be adopted for the appointment of polling personnel for various Polling Stations –

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>No. of Voters in Polling Station</b>	<b>No. of Polling Personnel to be appointed</b>
1	Upto 200 Voters	One Presiding Officer + One Polling Officer
2	201 to 400 Voters	One Presiding Officer + Two Polling Officer
3	From 401 to 650 Voters	One Presiding Officer + Three Polling Officer

One of the Polling Officer(s) will also be designated as Assistant Presiding Officer.

While appointing the Presiding Officers and Polling Officers, particularly from the employees of Local Bodies, care should be taken to ensure that they do not have any political affiliations towards any party or candidate.

It may be kept in view that the polling of the Gram Panchayats in the District may be conducted in two or more phases, in such a manner that, all the Gram Panchayats in a Mandal will go to the polls as a whole on the same day.

A reserve of polling personnel to an extent of 10% under each category should be kept at the Mandal headquarters.

**4. PROPER MIXING OF POLLING PERSONNEL DRAWN FROM DIFFERENT OFFICES:**

In orders to avoid any allegation of collusion among the polling personnel in favour of any candidate or political party and to instill confidence in the minds of political parties and candidates about free and fair elections, it should be ensured that proper mixing of polling personnel drawn from different offices and departments is done at the time of formation of polling party. The criteria to be followed while constituting polling parties in enunciated below –

- (a) Presiding Officers and Polling Officers are classified on the basis of scale of pay, their post and rank. Presiding Officers should be of higher scale/grade in comparison to all polling officers in that Polling Station.
- (b) No person should be assigned polling duties in his/her native Mandal and working Mandal.
- (c) Any two members of the polling party should not be from the same office/school.
- (d) Subject to availability of sufficient female personnel, at least one Female Polling Officer must be posted in a polling station.
- (e) Selection of Polling Officers of every shall party shall be done on random basis.

## 5. RANDOMIZATION OF POLLING PERSONNEL:

- (a) From out of the total database of eligible personnel, a list of 120% of required number of polling personnel should be generated (including reserve) randomly by using above software. This is the **first** stage of randomization process. Presence of observers is not required at this stage. This is only to identify and select the officials that would be given training for polling duties as Presiding and Asst. Presiding Officers in whichever Mandal they may be (source Mandals). All the polling personnel will know at this stage is whether he/she is a Presiding Officer or a Asst. Presiding Officer or Polling Officer and the venue date and time of 1<sup>st</sup> training class in case of Presiding Officers/ Asst. Presiding Officers.

Thereafter, orders of appointment and intimation of training be prepared in the form given in **Annexure-II** appended and communicated to the persons after due authentication. Orders of appointment of polling personnel kept in reserve should also be communicated to them. All the Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers, included in the reserve should also attend the training classes. Blank Forms of orders of appointment should be got printed in advance. The orders of appointment should also contain the details of training classes and should be served well in advance of the training dates.

First training class to POs and APOs can be conducted at first stage by ROs and AROs. The occasion should be used for obtaining requisitions for Postal Ballots in form – XIV.

- (b) The **second** stage of randomization should be done in the presence of General Observers deployed in the District by Station Election Commission. At this stage, actual polling parties should be formed on random basis using the randomization software. Each polling party shall be assigned with a code number. At this stage though the actual polling station will not be known, however, details of Mandals allotted and team composition may be known. The Second randomization should not take place earlier than 7 days before the day of poll. At this stage a code number has to be assigned to each poll party. Orders may be served to the personnel in **Annexure-III** by the receiving Asst. District Election Authority/MPDO concerned duly indicating the date and time of Poll, 2<sup>nd</sup> training class venue and timings (in case of POs/APOs), details of the Distribution centre etc well in advance.

The second training class to POs and APOs can be conducted at this stage by receiving Assistant District Election Authorities (MPDOs)/ ROs and AROs.

- (c) The **Third** stage of randomization exercise shall take place one day prior to actual dispersal of polling parties. This stage of randomization for final allocation of polling station to each polling party should also be done under the supervision of General Observers. This will be done basing on the code number allotted to each poll party duly assigning a polling station to that code. The actual polling stations allotted to the individual polling personnel is to be disclosed just before the polling party at the Distribution centre, receives the poll material at Distribution centre. Orders to be served to Polling Parties in **Annexure-IV** at the Distribution Centre indicating the name of the Gram Panchayat, Ward No, Polling Station Number etc.
- (d) The General Observers should make a special reference to the randomization exercise observed by them while submitting the report to State Election Commission.

## **6. TRAINING TO POLLING PERSONNEL:**

The District Election Authorities are informed that, it is of utmost importance that all persons selected for polling duty as Presiding Officers and Asst. Presiding Officers including those on the reserve lists Zonal Officers and Returning Offices should be adequately trained in the duties entrusted to them. Every such person should attend at least two training classes, one out of them will be practical training. At each training class, as far as possible, there should not be more than 50 or 60 personnel. The attendance at each class should be checked and recorded before the class starts, so that necessary disciplinary action or prosecution as the case may be is initiated readily.

The District Collectors shall arrange for imparting two training classes for Polling Personnel for conducting polls with Ballot Boxes / EVMs as the case may be. The Commissioner, PR & RE and Election Authority will arrange for supply of Hand Books for Presiding Officers. The pattern of election is comparable to simultaneous elections to the House of People and State Legislative Assembly where either Ballot Boxes or EVMs are used.

The training classes should be conducted by the Asst. District Election Authorities concerned under the supervision of Deputy District Election Authorities concerned. Before that the Returning Officers, and Assistant Returning Officers of Stage – II shall be trained by the persons authorized by the District Election Authority. No officer who has been appointed as Returning Officer would be entrusted with polling duties.

## **7. ZONAL OFFICERS:**

Zonal Officers may be appointed at the rate of two per Mandal. The Zonal Officers should be invited for training rehearsals. They must be provided with vehicles to ensure effective Co-ordination and Monitoring. A Zonal Officer should be able to visit each polling area in his jurisdiction at least two times on the day of poll.

## **8. COUNTING PERSONNEL:**

In Gram Panchayat elections, the counting of votes will be taken up on the same day, in the afternoon by the Returning Officer concerned. The same polling personnel will assist the Returning Officer for counting of votes as counting supervisor and counting assistants.

Hence, proper trainings have to be imparted to polling personnel in counting of votes also by the concerned Deputy/Asst. Dist. Election Authorities specially emphasizing on disposal of doubtful votes polled.

**Sd/- Dr. N. Ramesh Kumar**  
**State Election Commissioner**

To

The Collectors and District Election Authorities.

The District Panchayat Officers.

Copy to the Principal Secretary to Government, PR & RD Dept., A.P.

Copy to the Election Authority & Commissioner of Panchayat Raj, A.P.

// Forwarded :: By Order //



Secretary

**ANNEXURE – I**

**ELECTIONS TO GRAM PANCHAYATS  
\_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT**

**ORDER ON APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICERS /  
ASSISTANT RETURNING OFFICERS**

I hereby appoint the officers specified in column 1,2 and 3 below as Returning Officer (Stage-I), Returning Officer (Stage-II) and Assistant Returning Officers respectively for holding elections to the offices of the Sarpanch, Upa-Sarpanch and Ward Members of \_\_\_\_\_ Gram Panchayat in \_\_\_\_\_ Mandal Praja Parishad.

Name, designation and office address of Returning Officer, Stage-I	Name, designation and office address of Returning Officer, Stage-II	Name, designation and office address of Assistant Returning Officer(s) Stage-I
(1)	(2)	(3)

**The Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officers(s) shall attend the training classes as indicated below:-**

Name of the Officer	Date of Class	Hour	Place where the class will be held	Designation of officer who will conduct the class
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Returning Officer, Stage-I				
Returning Officer, Stage-II				
Assistant Returning Officer, Stage-I				

**The officers appointed as Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers will be paid Travelling Allowance and Conveyance Allowance, as per the rates fixed by the Government.**

Place: .....

Date: .....

District Election Authority/  
Dy. District Election Authority

Attested

Signature of the Attesting Officer

**ANNEXURE – II**

**ELECTIONS TO GRAM PANCHAYATS  
DISTRICT**

**ORDER OF APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER /  
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS / POLLING OFFICERS**

I hereby appoint the Officers specified below as Presiding Officer / Assistant Presiding Officer / Polling Officer for elections to Ward Members and Sarpanch of Gram Panchayats to be held on .....

Name and address of the Presiding Officer / Assistant Presiding Officer /  
Polling Officer: .....  
Employee Code: .....

Date :  
Place :

**Signature of District Election Authority,  
..... District /  
Signature of Asst. Dist. Election Authority  
..... Mandal Praja Parishad (sponsoring)**

**Note:-**

1. The Training Classes to acquaint the Procedure of conduct of election will be held: on ..... at .....AM/PM at ..... (Place) and the Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers should attend the Training Classes.
2. The Polling Officers need not attend the training classes. They should directly report to the distribution centre which will be intimated later.
3. The details of the 2<sup>nd</sup> training class, Mandal allotment, Date & Time of poll Distribution Centre will be intimated later by the receiving Asst. Dist. Election Authority.

**Failure to attend training classes and polling duties will be viewed seriously. Defaulting Officers are not only liable for disciplinary action but are also liable for prosecution.**

**Receipt:**

Received the appointment order as Presiding Officer / Assistant Presiding Officer / Polling Officer from the District Election Authority / Asst. District Election Authority/MPDO for elections to Ward Members and Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat and intimation of 1<sup>st</sup> Training Class in case of Presiding Officer / Assistant Presiding Officer.

Employee Code: ..... Signature :  
Name :  
Designation :

**ANNEXURE – III**

**ELECTIONS TO GRAM PANCHAYATS  
\_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT**

**ORDER OF APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDING AND OTHER POLLING OFFICERS  
(To be served by the receiving Asst. DEA/MPDO after 2<sup>nd</sup> Randomization)**

I hereby appoint the Officers specified in column 3 and 4 of table below as Presiding Officers and Polling Officers respectively for Gram Panchayat Elections of ..... Mandal Praja Parishad.

I also authorize the Polling Officer specified in column 5 of the table against that entry to perform the functions of the Presiding Officer during the unavoidable absence, if any, of the Presiding Officer.

**TABLE**

Name of the Mandal allotted	Team Code Number	Name & Designation of the Presiding Officer	Names of the Polling Officer(s)	Polling Officer authorized to perform the functions of the Presiding Officer in the latter's absence out of column: 4
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Date :  
Place :

**Signature of DEA**  
..... **District/**  
**Signature of Asst. Dist. Election Authority**  
..... **Mandal Praja Parishad**

**Note:-**

1. The 2<sup>nd</sup> training will be held at ..... on..... at.....(Venue)
2. The date of poll is.....between .....and ..... (hours).
3. You should report to the Returning Officer at ..... Distribution Centre on..... (Date) at ..... (time) for taking delivery of polling materials.
4. The polling officers need not attend the training class. They shall report directly at above Distribution Centre on ..... at .....AM.

**Failure to attend polling duties will be viewed seriously. Defaulting Officers are not only liable for disciplinary action but are also liable for prosecution.**

**ANNEXURE – IV**

**ELECTIONS TO GRAM PANCHAYATS  
DISTRICT**

**ORDER OF APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDING AND OTHER POLLING OFFICERS  
(To be served on the day of distribution)**

I hereby appoint the Officers specified in column 3 and 4 of table below as Presiding Officers and Polling Officers respectively for the polling station(s) specified in the corresponding entry in column 2 for the Ward specified in column 1 of the table provided for Gram Panchayat of ..... Mandal Praja Parishad.

I also authorize the Polling Officer specified in column 5 of the table against that entry to perform the functions of the Presiding Officer during the unavoidable absence, if any, of the Presiding Officer.

**TABLE**

Ward No. & Name	Polling Station No & Name	Name & Designation of the Presiding Officer	Names of the Polling Officer(s)	Polling Officer authorized to perform the functions of the Presiding Officer in the latter's absence out of column: 4
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Date :

Place :

**Signature of District Election Authority,  
..... District /**

**Signature of Asst. Dist. Ele. Authority**

**..... Mandal Praja Parishad**

**Note:-** The date of poll is .....between .....and.....(hours).

**Failure to attend polling duties will be viewed seriously. Defaulting Officers are not only liable for disciplinary action but are also liable for prosecution.**