

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO VOTING RIGHTS

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DID you know that if someone has cast a vote in your name, you need not return home irate, that you can still vote? The law allows you to cast a "tendered vote". You can seek a tendered ballot paper as per rule 51 of Representation of People's Act from the presiding officer at the polling station, and sign your name in the list of tendered votes. After mark-

ing your choice, you must present it to the presiding officer. But note, do not use the ballot paper then. It will be counted only when the contesting candidates secure the same number of votes or when disputes regarding counting arise.

This is only one of the frequent doubts clarified by the 'ABC of Voting, a guide for voter participation in Indian elections'. Compiled by the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), it is in the final draft stage now, and will be out soon. This it has done in preparation for the corporation elections in November. The PAC will also send copies to the Chief Election Commissioner, and Chief Electoral Officers of all states, and to resident groups and NGOs.

Targeted at the middle and upper middle classes, the questions are applicable to assembly, parliamentary and urban local body elections, says Smita Bidarkar, PAC. "Sometimes, officials at the election commission offices themselves do not have the required information, and do not know which form is to be given for a specific purpose. Sometimes the enumerators are not trained, or they may be new to the task. That's why we thought of

such a guide."

Written in reader-friendly language, the guide is in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) format. The total number of questions is 42.

While Part I deals with the introduction, Part II deals with what you should know to be an informed voter. The questions here range from "Can I

be enrolled in more than one place?" to "Can my registration be

transferred?"

Part III deals with "How do I exercise my vote?" Here, questions range from "What are voter ID cards?" to "How can I be sure that my vote is recorded?"

Part IV deals with Grievance Redressal Mechanism - How to be a responsible and alert voter. This tells you what to do when ineligible, under-aged persons are registered, or if voters are registered at multiple places; or when there has been no publicity of draft rolls; or if your name has not appeared on the voter's list even after submitting application and following the procedure.

Part V includes information on election-related grievances: What you can do if officials misbehave; or if they assist in elec-

tioning; or if conveyance has been provided to the voter, or if the voter has been bribed; or if there have been instances of booth capturing. It also includes information on how to file an election petition in the high court. The annexure gives the meanings of key legal terms, a list of NGOs working in the electoral arena, electoral offences and electoral forms.

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