



Republic of Liberia
National Elections Commission (NEC)



NOVEMBER 4, 2005

TALKING POINTS
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CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION

☐ NEC ENCOURAGES VOTERS TO GO TO POLLS ON NOVEMBER 8

With just four days left before the Run-off Election on November 8, the NEC wishes to encourage all Liberians to vote as enthusiastically as they did on October 11.

As we are all aware, no single candidate obtained the required 50% plus one vote in the Presidential race to be declared winner. As such, the two presidential candidates with the most votes, George Weah who obtained 28.3% of the votes, and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who received 19.8%, will be contesting the second round.

Let me also remind everyone that each candidate starts afresh. Their previous vote totals do not carry over to this election.

We congratulate the candidates and their supporters on a peaceful campaign period for the Run-off election. We hope the same dignity and calm will be maintained on November 8 and in the days following as we release the results.

Once again, the overwhelming majority of Liberians have shown that we can be tolerant of differing views and perspectives, despite rumors designed to tempt some to lose patience or to lose faith in our electoral system. The NEC and our international partners will help to ensure that the election will be free, fair, transparent, and one that represents the will of the people.

Please be reminded that NEC is the only entity which can release official results. Any announcements or claims, coming from sources other than the NEC should not be considered official, and therefore valid results.

☐ WORKSHOP FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

A workshop for physically disabled and visually impaired voters on how to use tactile ballot guides was held jointly by NEC and IFES on Wednesday, November 2nd. 35 representatives from 13 civil society organizations from around the country took part in the workshop. The attendants of the workshop were given instructions on how to use the tactile ballot guide to help them and other members of their organizations vote in the Run-Off election.

☐ CIVIC EDUCATION MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION

The NEC and its Civic Education partners have been intensifying efforts throughout the country, but specifically in IDP Camps. Civic Educators have impressed to IDPs the importance of their vote on November 8. In addition, the NEC is distributing posters on how to mark your ballot and those reminding voters with disabilities or requiring help to bring someone to assist them on polling day.

☐ POLLING MATERIALS

All bulk items such lanterns, batteries and tarpaulins, for the Run-off election have been packed and delivered by air and land during the past week. 3070 Polling place kits, including the ballot papers have been prepared and delivered to County Offices. Presidential ballots are in secure UNMIL storage until they are deployed to individual polling places for voting.

☐ MONITORING AND OBSERVING

The NEC expects approximately 230 International observers in addition to approximately 4,000 domestic observers observe the Run-off election. Briefing packets have been compiled and been availed to arriving observers. Since the number of observer groups for the Run-Off is lower than for the October 11 election, briefings have been provided to those who have requested them.

The two parties whose standard bearers are in the running, CDC and Unity Party, have indicated that they intend to increase the number of representatives in place for the Run-Off. NEC strongly supports the presence of representatives in as many polling places as possible and is issuing additional accreditation cards for these representatives. Their participation is welcome as it enhances the transparency and credibility of the electoral process.

❑ CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH PARTIES

An Inter-Party Consultative Committee meeting took place on Wednesday, November 2. The meeting was chaired by the NEC Co-Chair, and attendees were briefed on the rules and regulations concerning the campaign period, as well as on the monitoring by the representatives of the political parties and independent candidates.

NEC announced that:

- 1) Accredited representatives of all political parties/coalitions/alliances/ independent candidates for the 11 October elections will be allowed to observe the Run-Off elections with the previously-issued accreditation;
- 2) Parties will be allowed to replace representatives for the Run-Off, and the necessary additional accreditation will be made available;
- 3) CDC and UP will be entitled to have a representative in the Polling Places at all times even if others are required to rotate due to space constraints;
- 4) At the end of the process, the first two copies of the Record of Account Form will be given to CDC and UP representatives, after which copies will be distributed to other representatives.

In addition, the NEC and UNMIL Electoral Division External Relations Unit also addressed some of the concerns raised on the procedures of the elections, particularly the role of the Presiding Officers, polling staff instructions to voters, numbers of representatives at the polling places, display of tallying results, etc. UNMIL Electoral Division provided the IPCC members with the revised procedures to the field staff for the Run-Off elections, which addresses some of the concerns raised by the members. Additional civic education materials were also provided.

❑ POLLING STAFF

As mentioned at Tuesday's Press Conference, trained Electoral Support Officer and Election Supervisor teams are conducting training for Presiding Officers on the procedures revised for the election. These will conclude on Saturday October 5. The Presiding Officers will in turn brief their poll workers on the changes.

The NEC would like to take this opportunity to remind voters that they are required to cast their ballot at the same place they voted for the October 11 Election. The public is urged to keep their voter cards safe, as no replacement cards are being issued for the Run-off.

In order to assist the voters further, directional signs will be placed the day before the election where voters easily can see them.

❑ ACCESSIBILITY TO SITES

Following the heavy rains of the last few months, many roads have been badly damaged and more bridges have collapsed. In some places, passage ways have been flooded, and it will take some time for water levels to recede in order to make these passable again. This has resulted in an increase in the number of inaccessible sites from 255 to 273. While some roads and bridges are under repair, most will likely not be usable by polling day. The NEC is fully prepared to deliver and retrieve materials with these difficulties in mind. In the case of Upper Bong and Upper Nimba Counties on the other hand, some voting precincts considered difficult to access in the October 11 election have now been re-categorized as easily accessible due to improved road conditions.

❑ VOTER ASSISTANCE

To improve voters' ability to vote more easily on November 8, the NEC will provide enlarged sample ballots which will be displayed inside voting screens. Those voters who have difficulty deciphering details of the actual ballot will benefit from this enlarged voting aide. A lantern will also be available for those voters who need additional lighting in order to see the ballot.

❑ NEC REIMBURSEMENTS TO POLL WORKERS

The NEC wishes to clarify that it has released funds to its Magistrates to reimburse those who served as poll workers on October 11 the amount of \$5 per person to cover meals. We ask poll workers to be patient, as it may take some time for these reimbursements to reach all those who worked in the October 11 elections.

Individuals who have signed contracts to serve as polling staff for the November 8 Run-Off Election are expected to report for duty whether or not they have received their reimbursement before Tuesday. This is a civic duty. The NEC will take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that poll workers receive their reimbursements as quickly as possible.