

Guidance on Bahá'í Elections

Quotations from the writings of Shoghi Effendi:

I earnestly appeal to every one of you ... to ... endeavor to approach your task ... with that purity of spirit that can alone obtain our Beloved's most cherished desire.

Let them exercise the utmost vigilance so that the elections are carried out freely, universally and by secret ballot. Any form of intrigue, deception, collusion and compulsion must be stopped and is forbidden.

Beware, beware lest the foul odour of the parties and peoples ... and their pernicious methods, such as intrigues, party politics and propaganda—practices which are abhorrent even in name—should ever reach the Bahá'í community, exert any influence whatsoever upon the friends, and thus bring all spirituality to naught. The friends should, through their devotion, love, loyalty and altruism, abolish these evil practices, not imitate them. It is only after the friends completely ignore and sanctify themselves from these evils, that the spirit of God can penetrate and operate in the body of humanity, and in the Bahá'í community.

The strength and progress of the Bahá'í community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls.

The electors ... must prayerfully and devotedly and after meditation and reflection elect faithful, sincere, experienced, capable and competent souls who are worthy of membership....

...the friends must whole-heartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.

If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá'í Assemblies ... we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.

... the qualifications [of delegates and Assembly members] which he [Shoghi Effendi] outlined are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Bahá'í office, whatever its nature. But these are only an indication, they do not mean people who don't fulfill them cannot be elected to office. We must aim as high as we can. He does not feel the friends should attach so much importance to limitations—such as people perhaps not being able to attend Assembly or Convention meetings, because if they do, then the fundamental concept of everyone being willing to do Bahá'í service on administrative bodies will be weakened, and the friends may be tempted to vote for those who because of independent means or circumstances in their lives are freer to come and go but less qualified to serve.

Extracts from communications of the Universal House of Justice:

From among the pool of those whom the elector believes to be qualified to serve, selection should be made with due consideration given to such other factors as age distribution, diversity, and gender. The elector should make his choice after careful thought over an extended period before the actual election.

Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, March 25, 2007

The House of Justice appreciates that many of the voters at a district election may have a limited acquaintance with the believers of the area, although naturally they will do all they can during the year to follow the news of the work of the Faith and the activities of their fellow believers. All that any voter can do is to vote for those among the believers who are known to him either personally or by reputation, trusting in God to produce ultimately the best result for the Faith.

Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, February 14, 1982