



NATIONAL ELECTION WATCH



Recommendations on Electoral and Political Reforms

National Election Watch (NEW) and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)

Recommendations for Electoral Reforms

1. For upholding the highest traditions of probity and morality in public life, any person against whom charges have been framed by a Court of Law of serious offences like murder, attempt to murder, rape, kidnapping, extortion, etc. should not be allowed to contest elections.
2. In order to protect the identity of a voter wishing to exercise his/her right under Section 49(O), an additional button on the EVM should be there saying “None of the Above”.
3. Candidates should declare their income and sources of income along with the current declaration of assets and liabilities at the time of nominations.
4. The excessive use of money in elections vitiates democracy. Anyone who breaks the law by giving money and gifts to voters, or exceeding the legal spending limits should have his/her election set aside.
5. The information given in the affidavits on criminal charges, assets etc. should be verified by an independent central authority in a time bound manner. Strong action should be taken against candidates on finding serious anomalies.
6. Clean and accurate voter rolls are the very basis for a functioning democracy. The process to keep them accurate and updated should be made completely citizen friendly. There should be only one voter list for all elections. Access to voter rolls should be made available at all times.
7. As people have the right to elect their representatives, they should also have the right to recall them.
8. The Election Commissioners should be appointed by a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.
9. The Election Commissioners should not be eligible for any office after retirement for a period of 5 years. They should also not be allowed to join any political party for a period of 5 years after retirement.

Note 1: Resolutions 1 and 2 above are supported by the Election Commission of India. The EC has written to the Prime Minister with this and several other suggestions a few years ago. Resolution 2 above emerged as the single most repeated demand across the country.

Recommendations for reform of Political Parties

1. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive Bill to regulate political parties. An excellent draft for this has already been prepared by the Law Commission. Such a Bill needs to be passed by Parliament.
2. There is a need to make it mandatory for all recognized registered political parties to have democratically elected bodies and their functioning, including their financial status, should be made transparent and known to all.
3. Since it has been made mandatory for all candidates to make their financial status public, the political parties should also be called upon to regularly file statements of their assets and liabilities, which should also be made public.
4. Political parties and candidates should declare their sources of funds well before elections so that voters can make an informed choice.

Other Issues

The illegal and unconstitutional allocation of public funds in the name of MP and MLA Local Area Development should be stopped.

Note 2: In our country there are Bills to regulate Companies, Charitable trusts, Societies, Cooperatives, Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Trade Unions, places of worship and other forms of organized activity. However there is no Bill to regulate political parties. Several other countries have such Bills. The two main issues at this point in time are regulation of political party and election funding and expenses, and ensuring inner party democracy.