



Electoral Reform Update

Presented by:

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Mr Speaker

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on the Government's ongoing work to advance comprehensive electoral reform. My remarks will focus solely on the process this Government has undertaken and intends to follow. In full respect of Standing Order 20, I will not refer to or comment on any other matter that may be before this House now or in the future.

Mr Speaker

This work on Electoral Reform is not new. During the May 2025 Budget Debate, I stated that the Government would move forward with electoral reform in a deliberate, phased way, beginning with research and engagement, and culminating in the introduction of legislation only after a full policy framework had been developed and shared with the public. At that time, I also clarified that while no dedicated funding line was included in the Budget for absentee voting, work would proceed using existing resources to lay the policy foundation.

Mr Speaker

That work began in earnest in June, when we initiated meetings with the Parliamentary Registrar. These discussions focused on how our elections are

administered in practice and what changes may be needed to support a modern, secure, and fair voting system. I want to thank the Registrar for her continued engagement, which remains central to this work.

Mr Speaker

In August, plans to host virtual and in-person meetings were finalised. Additionally, research on voting systems worldwide that employ absentee voting, along with research on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's election benchmarks, was conducted.

Mr Speaker

In October and early November, we hosted two virtual sessions with Bermudian students overseas and local youth groups. These young voters shared frank and constructive feedback about the barriers they face when trying to vote from abroad. The conversations covered concerns such as eligibility, verification, timing, and trust. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping how we have to think about absentee voting into the broader reform process.

Mr Speaker

More recently, we held the first of the proposed series of public town hall meetings at Harrington Workman's Club. Approximately 35 people attended, and we presented the four pillars guiding this work:

- Voter access and registration
- Election Day processes
- Campaign and election finance rules
- Governance and oversight through the Parliamentary Registrar's Office

The questions we received, both from the floor and anonymously through the online question application, Slido, reflected a clear public understanding that this reform cannot be about one issue alone.

Mr Speaker

People asked about voter roll accuracy, Election Day consistency, political finance, digital campaigning, and the need for strong, independent oversight. What we heard from the public aligns with what we have said from the beginning:

This work must be approached as a complete package, not a set of isolated changes.

I also want to thank the OBA MP, Senator and former election candidate who attended the town hall for their participation. I am encouraged to see the embracing of the obvious need for bipartisan support for Electoral Reform.

Mr Speaker

From the very beginning, we have said that the people of Bermuda will help shape these reforms. This is not just good policy; it is how you build public trust. We will continue this engagement with at least five more town halls planned across the Island on January 5th, 8th, 15th, 19th and the 22nd., and two more hybrid-virtual sessions with overseas Bermudian Students scheduled for December 22nd and January 20th, structured dialogue with political parties and civil society, and the formation of a working group to guide the development of the Electoral Reform Policy Framework. Additionally, the government's Bermuda Citizens Forum webpage will also be used to foster public dialogue and conversation on this topic.

Mr Speaker

We aim to finalise and publish the policy framework in early 2026. The Drafting of Legislation will follow only after that work is complete. This reflects our long-held belief, supported by our public statements, that if we are going to modernise our elections, we must do it the right way:

- with research
- public consultation, and
- careful design.

Our democracy is one of the few things in Bermuda that belongs to all of us. And the changes we make now must be built to last, regardless of who sits on which side of this House.

Thank You, Mr Speaker