



RESEARCH PAPER**Political Economy of Electoral Politics: Probing the Dynamics of Party Funding in Pakistan's General Elections 2018**

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ABSTRACT

The economy of electoral politics deals with the role of money in the electoral field. This study aims to identify the impact of the economy on the electoral politics of Pakistan. The background analyzed the role of political parties in Pakistan's general elections 2018. Parties had spent an excessive money on their campaigns to increase their chances of winning the elections as electoral success largely depends on the amount of money that is spent in elections. Furthermore, the explanatory type of qualitative method, specifically the case study method is used to conduct the study. It has relied on primary and secondary sources of data collection. Lastly, uncontrolled expenditure compromises the fairness of the democratic process as the spending limits solely apply to candidates, leaving political parties exempt. Thus, there is a need to adopt a plethora of policies to regulate money circulation into politics.

KEYWORDS

Campaign Spending, Expenditure, Political Financing, Political Parties, Sanctions

Introduction

The political economy of electoral politics examines the influence of financial resources within the electoral arena. It essentially explicates the role of money in the electoral field. Money is an essential resource for political parties and candidates to publicize their platforms and run successful campaigns. In order to improve the prospects of winning elections, the candidates gave large sums of money to their canvassing campaigns. Many countries limit the amount of money that candidates can spend in order to control and reduce campaign expenses. However, the candidates go beyond these limitations and invest a large amount of money during their canvassing.

Thus, the challenge of regulating political financing persists globally, posing a formidable barrier to maintaining the fairness of electoral systems. Despite elections being vital for democracy, the substantial financial burdens associated with electoral process, particularly evident in countries like, Pakistan, underscore the pervasive influence of money in politics. This reality, as highlighted by (Es, 2016) undermines public trust in elected officials and erodes the legitimacy of governance structures.

The heightened scrutiny of political funding sources during the 2018 general elections underscores the need for a thorough examination of regulatory frameworks governing party finance during that period. By analyzing the regulatory mechanisms and enforcement strategies employed, this study aims to elucidate how political financing

regulations navigate the complexities of party funding within the electoral landscape. Ultimately, the effectiveness of political financing regulations reflects a nation's commitment to democratic ideals and the integrity of electoral processes. Through a comprehensive understanding of these regulations, policymakers can enact measures to mitigate the undue influence of money in politics and foster a more inclusive and equitable electoral environment.

Literature Review

Electoral Politics

Iftikhar Ahmad examines the phenomenon of elections in Pakistan in its totality with a welcome emphasis on the socio-political realities. The work has given a comprehensive analysis of the first general election based on adult franchises in the history of Pakistan. From this volume, one gets the distinct impression that elections in South Asia from 1909 to 1970 have had a disturbing quality of restricting rather than facilitating the participation of the masses (Ahmad, 1976).

M. Waseem provided a thorough information about 1993 general elections. The volume described that Pakistan was considered a non-election country for an extended period. And whenever elections were held, there was a different legal-constitutional system. Illegal activities also harmed the essence of elections, as polling results were regarded as less than genuinely indicative of popular opinion (Waseem, 1994).

Hussain in his work gave a comprehensive analysis of the 1997 elections. It also covered the historical background and depicts various variables of elections. Many electoral regulations were altered before the elections to promote openness in the electoral process. However, the elections were alleged as biased and unfair, and the election results gave a chance to many new faces to come into politics and play their role (Hussain, 1997).

M. Waseem wrote about the democratization process in Pakistan. While evaluating the 2002 general elections, he remained very critical about the past general elections. The literature not only gave a comprehensive analysis of the 2002 elections but also draws a theoretical framework the electoral studies in Pakistan (Waseem, 2006).

Rizvi in his article gave detailed information about the history of elections in Pakistan. The volume is divided into two parts. The first part elaborated the historical statements and the second highlighted the success of the political parties in the first ten general elections. The general elections from 1977 to 2008 have been defined as a story that provides information about the changes in socio-economic trends in the electoral field of Pakistan (Rizvi, 2013, p. 21).

Party Funding

Hussain in his article explains that political power relations and financial priorities interact to influence governance and election results in Pakistan. This relationship between finance and electoral politics extremely affects Pakistan's larger government structure (Hussain, 2020, p. 62).

Khan's work explores the complex regulatory environment that oversees electoral financing in Pakistan. It provides an in depth analysis of legal regulations and concrete information to clarify the shortcoming in accountability and transparency that exist in party finance structures. In order to protect the integrity and equity of election funding in

Pakistan, the investigation emphasizes the necessity of regulatory change based on factual data and expert viewpoints (Khan, 2019, p. 34).

Malik in his article provides a detailed information on the noteworthy function fulfilled by economic elites in funding political parties, elucidating their influence on policy goals and election outcomes (Malik, 2021, p. 18).

Ahmad's work examines how digital platforms can revolutionize political finance and emphasizes how this will affect party financing strategies as well as voter participation (Ahmad, 2023, p. 14).

This study, explores the impact of foreign actors, both state and non-state on the dynamics of party financing in Pakistani elections is examined. It provided insight into how foreign funding effects election integrity and results (Mahmood, 2022, p. 29).

Methodology-Case Study Approach

As to research methodology, the qualitative research has been adopted to probe the research questions. This research carried out a well-received explanatory research strategy specifically the case study research for the investigation of the current electoral system of Pakistan.

Party Funding in Pakistan's General Election 2018

The regulation of political financing is a severe problem in many countries. Elections are undoubtedly vital for democracy, but the states are paying enormous amounts for this electoral setup. Money politics weakened the people's confidence in elected officials and threatened the government's legitimacy in weak states like Mexico, Thailand, and Afghanistan. Even long-standing democracies like the United States, Japan, and Italy are not exempted from notorious scandals and disputes concerning money's influence in politics (Es, 2016). The most frequent problems that countries are facing are undue influence, government involving kickbacks, and prohibited contributions, from the fact that political parties' war chests do not continuously operate on an even playing field.

Thus, the increased role of money in the electoral field, posing a significant hurdle in maintaining the integrity of electoral process. Elections are undoubtedly vital for democracy; however, Pakistan is paying enormous amount for this electoral setup. The sources and openness of political money attracted a lot of attention and discussion during the general elections that held in 2018. As the parties spent extravagant amount during election period. For this reason, legal frameworks are essential to control the excessive usage of money in the electoral field.

Regulatory Framework Regarding Party Funding in Pakistan

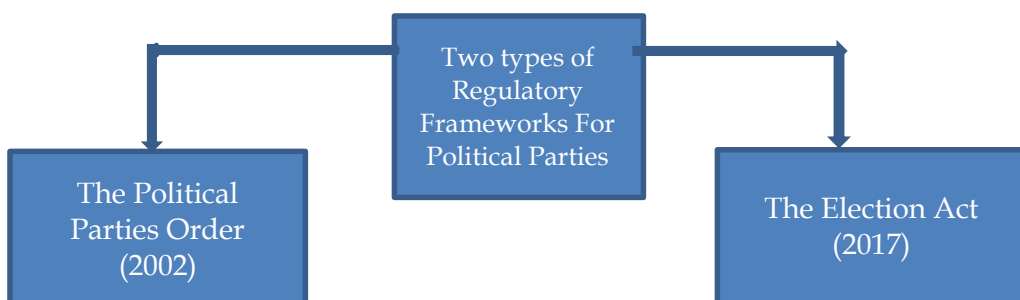


Figure 1: Legislative Framework for Party Funding

There are two types of regulatory frameworks regarding party funding, the Political Parties Order (2002) and the Election Act (2017).

The Political Parties Order (2002)

The Chapter II of the political parties order 2002 deals with the formation, constitution, membership fee and contributions, elections, certification and information about the sources of party's funds.

Membership Fee and Contributions

Section 6

This provision outlines rules for political party funding; Members must pay fees and can give voluntary contributions, which must be recorded. Contributions from foreign entities or corporations are banned; only individual donations are allowed. Prohibited contributions will be seized by the state.

Information about the sources of Party's fund

Section 10

Political parties must submit a yearly audited financial statement to the Election Commission within sixty days at the end of every financial year. This declaration needs to contain information about the party's yearly earnings, outlays, funding sources, assets and debts.

Chapter III deals with the Dissolution of Political Parties

Dissolution of a Political Party

Section 15

If the Federal Government determines that a political party is receiving foreign aid, acting against Pakistan's sovereignty, or involved in terrorism. Within fifteen days, the matter will be referred to the Supreme Court. If the SC maintains the decision, the party will be dissolved immediately.

Effects of Dissolution of Political Party

Section 16

If a political party is dissolved under section 15, anyone from that party serving in Parliament or a Provincial Assembly will be disqualified for the remainder of their term. Disqualified individuals cannot participate in elections or hold any elective office for four years after their disqualification (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2002).

The Election Act 2017

The Election Act 2017 outlines several regulations aimed at ensuring fairness and transparency within the electoral system (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2017).

Table 1
Regulations Regarding Party Funding

Chapter Eleven (XI) of the Election Act 2017	Political Parties, Fees, Contributions, and Financing of Campaigns.
Section 204	Membership Fee, and Donations
Section 204, Sub- Section 2	A political organization must accurately record the cost, participation, or offering given by its member or follower.
Section 203, Sub- Section 3	It is forbidden for any outside source, particularly an overseas government, international organization, private or public enterprise, or industry to make an offering or donation.
Section 203, Sub- Section 4	Any present or offering that is unlawful within this Act will be seized in the government's best interests.
Section 210	Information About the Sources of Funds
Section 210	A political organization must provide a consolidated report of its finances, certified by an accountant with Chartered Accountancy on Form D The verification document must state: The political organization did not get any contributions from any sources that are forbidden.
Section 211	Campaign Finance
Section 211 Sub- Section (1)	A political organization is required to provide an inventory of donors who have given a donation equivalent to or greater than 100,000 rupees for its election related spending.
Section 211 Sub- Section (2)	The Election Commission must receive information from a political organization on the costs it paid for elections.
Section 212	Dissolution of Political Party If a party receives any financial aid from any foreign organization or party, or individual or working against the integrity of the country it shall be dissolved after the verdict of SC.
Section 213	Effects of Dissolution of Political Party
Section 213, Sub- Section 1	When a Party stands dissolved all the members of such party will be disqualified for the remaining term.

Table 2
Regulations Regarding Campaign Expenditure

Chapter Eight (VIII) Of Election Act 2017	Restrictions on Election Expenses
Section 132, Sub- Section 3	The amount of money spent on elections by a candidate cannot exceed a) Rs1,500,000 for a position in the Senate. b) Rs4,000,000 for a position in the National Assembly. c) Rs2,000,000 for a position in a Provincial Assembly.
Sub-Section 4	Every payment made to cover election expenditures must be attested to by a candidate through bills, receipts, and other documentation, unless the sum is less than Rs 1,000.
Section 133	Election Expense Bank Account

Section 133, Sub-Section 1	Before the due date for the examination of nomination papers, an applicant must establish a separate account of a specified banking institution to pay for his election expenses.
Section 134	Remit of Election Related Costs
Section 134, Sub-Section 1	Before 30 days of the release of the removed applicant's name, a fighting candidate who is declared elected, must provide an account of their election costs.
Chapter Ten (X) of the Election Act 2017	Offences, Penalties and Procedures
Section 176	If an individual engages in corrupt practices, personation, using excessive power, seizing a polling place, interfering with election records, or violates the terms of section 132 will be liable to penalties.
Section 173	Encouraging the Publication of a Lie or Fraud
Section 174	Anyone found responsible for practicing corrupt behavior faces a sentence of three years in jail, or a penalty of up to 100,000 rupees.
Section 175	Illegal Practice
Section 175	An individual commits offense if he – transgresses Section 180's prohibitions against advertising or violates Section 134's requirements regarding election costs.
Section 183	Penalty for Illegal Practice
Section 183	An individual who engages in an illegal practice faces a sentence of 2 years in jail, or a penalty of 100,000.

On the basis of above mentioned restrictions, stricter checks on money flows were being made before general elections 2018. However, the contenders identified loopholes in the electoral laws and found ways to invest their campaigns.

Informal Payments for Pre-Poll Expenses

Many supporters and workers of political parties and candidates, both domestically and internationally, began sending funds months ahead of the election through unofficial channels to cover pre-poll expenses. This allowed for the movement of money without scrutiny from formal banking channels. To understand the flow of funds before the election, journalists contacted bank executives and conducted case studies. Bank officials provided various perspectives on the pre-poll money flow.

A senior executive from a regional bank noted, "We noticed changes in money transfer patterns a week before the polls and internally assessed them. Most banks engaged in this activity before elections, not to monitor specific transfers but to assess the dangers connected to irregular banking operations."

According to another Senior banker; "The cycle of financial activity leading up to the nationwide elections started with a massive influx of funds into the specified wallets of candidates, their officeholders, and senior politicians through official and unofficial banking routes".

Political campaigns often used various accounts to finance their pre-election expenses. Typically, the funds come from different sources such as donations from local and foreign donors, support from corporations and individuals all these sources are used for the election but are disguised as being used for other purposes. All these factors contribute to the uncontrolled flow of money within political campaigns (Aazim, 2018).

Usage of Mobile Wallets

The contestants used different ways to enlarge their resources from foreign channels. And at home, money is transferred for pre-election via bank accounts and smartphone wallets, a branchless financial tool. According to financial professionals and secret agency officials, large sums of money were transmitted and received in smaller chunks throughout Pakistan via smartphone wallets without financial institutions ever knowing the precise identity of the cash movers (Aazim, 2018).

The Corporate Funding

When it comes to the corporate field, big business organizations, leading companies and rich businessmen also provide financial assistance to political parties and the candidates. They provide big assistance to the leading candidates having humungous influence in their respective parties. However, such contributions to campaigns are tricky and hard to track because of flaws in financing laws. To evaluate the role of the corporate sector, several journalists reached out to the leading executive officials of different organizations.

When a senior businessman having solid connections with the leadership of dominant parties (PTI and PML-N), was asked about the funding of candidates and political parties, he replied; "If you're wondering whether my colleagues in trade and I donated to the electoral campaigns of individuals and political parties, the answer is yes. We fund them both personally and cooperatively.

The funds are transferred from our financial accounts to recipients via unofficial routes. He further said "You need to have a strong advocate in the administration to stop the government from enacting unfriendly business policies, which is essential if you are a businessman". A person from another leading organization said, that We don't have a favorite. The winner of this contest is our personal favorite. As a result, we attempt to make friendships with everybody and every political group that matters and could gain power in the coming days.

Money-rich people and large corporations often reward party leaders with flights, helicopters, presents, banquets, entertainment, and plenty of cash. Politicians as they believed that they had no lasting friends or adversaries.

In all likelihood, the corporate and commercial community's bread is returned in cakes, if a political party or its members decide to forget the favors after obtaining votes (Jamal, 2018).

Table 3

Election Campaign and Economic Activities in 2018 General Elections

Election Campaign	Economic Activities
Printing Presses	Several printing presses were involved in the election business. According to a printing press owner, "I have a big printing press with the latest machinery to do the election work efficiently". Due to the burden on the advertising agency, an owner of the printing press said that "he had also purchased computers and employed 8 to 10 new workers to run the machines, but it was becoming difficult for them to fulfil the orders."

Flying High	Political parties spent extensively on air transport during their canvassing. According to sources, five parties rented planes and choppers for a month. Hourly rates for rental were: \$ 8,000 for jets and \$ 5,000 for choppers; at Rs120 to a dollar if a party hired a jet and two choppers, their cost was Rs1.56 billion.
Panaflex Printing	Panaflex printing boomed during the election days. The printing companies were busy round the clock designing election material.
Flag Flying High	The flag-making business also saw a 100 percent increase in these elections. Many Flag makers claimed they made 2,000 flags daily and had roaring business. Nevertheless, the cost of a flag skyrocketed to 40 to 50 rupees, compared to Rs 15 per flag in 2013.
Election Offices	The candidates also set up election offices in their respective areas. The per constituency cost of such election offices was reaching millions as the minimum expenditure on an election office was about 55,000 rupees.
Expenditure on Personal Security	Many candidates spent incomprehensible amounts to protect their lives. According to the election security expert, "VIPs hired security personnel as a pattern that people preferred to cast their ballots in support of the contenders with a larger show of power. According to Sajid Awan, an agent from security company claimed, "they were billing Rs 5,000 a day for each bodyguard (Junaidi, 2018).
Expensive Tradition of Campaigning, Lunchtimes	According to food caterers, during the campaign of 2018 elections the demand for <i>Roti, Biryani, Qorma,</i> and <i>Zarda</i> was very high, which was provided to the contenders at their corner meetings and their election offices. The Directors and managerial staff of food catering companies disclosed that they delivered <i>1 to 3 deighs of Biryani</i> daily to the election offices to the contestants. Additionally, they also delivered <i>2 to 5 deighs</i> in smaller events and <i>5 to 10 deighs</i> for larger meetings (Aazim, 2018).
Advertisement Through Media Channels	Political parties with their large coffers spent a lot on advertisement through different media channels. The most expensive among them was electronic media campaign where "a single 60-second televised advertisement during prime time on a central news station costed between 40,000 rupees and 220,000 rupees". The cost brewed down to Rs. 25 million for a weekly, with a rate of Rs. 40,000 per minute.
Campaign Activities in Rural Constituencies	Candidates from rural areas managed their campaigns with extravagant expenditures. The election campaign cost began with the installing of "Autags" in remote areas to keep track of the campaign. In certain instances, applicants even paid to purchase votes (Khan, 2018).

Big Cars Leading the Charge

The rental car industry also flourished as the nation approached election time. Although the boom's exact size is unknown, dealers generally agree that it has increased by between 70 and 100 percent. Vehicle dealers state that "three brands accounted for over 95% of the demand: The Land Cruiser touring jeep, Prado, and the double cabin Vigo (also called Dala), which became a symbol of political and economic dominance". In the final two months before the elections, rental fees for high-profile brands increased by double or even triple. As the table shows;

Table 4
Rental Rates of High Profile Vehicles

Category of Vehicles	Duration	Rental Rates
Double Cabin Vigo	During one month	From 250,000 to 840,000 Rs.
Prado	During one month	From 450,000 to 1 million Rs.
Land Cruiser	During one month	From 750,000 to 1.5 million Rs.

According to Car dealers most of the demand was coming from two leading political parties "Even in Lahore, over 70 percent of the demand of these vehicles, was coming from PTI candidates." "Second, the PML-N members boost customer demand by about 20%" (Khan, 2018).

Table 5
Number of Election Meetings

Political Party	Public Meeting	Corner Meeting	Rally	Procession
PPP	26	8	7	9
PML-N	48	5	13	14
PTI	57	12	19	18
MQM	23	7	7	1
JUI-F	9	31	1	3

Polling Day Expenses

The contestants also spent a lot on election day. They claimed that they paid for forty percent of their electoral expenses before the polls while saving the other sixty percent to cover gasoline and transportation costs on election day alone.

According to a senior party activist who preferred to remain nameless pointed out; "Our contestant from a political organization used approximately **thirty million rupees** during the election day as he spent lavishly on transportation, food, and other trivial expenses" (Hussain, 2018).

Expenditure on Transport

The candidates also spent an average of Rs150,000 to Rs 200.000 on every single polling station to pay for the expenditures of gasoline, food, transportation and drinking water on election day. Nearly about 100 voting booths had been set up for a provincial legislature position. As a result, the candidates had to make arrangements regarding transportation at these polling stations. Transportation companies were also charging exorbitant fees for their autos, cars and other modes of transportation (Khan, 2018).

Results

- Legally, the candidates are required to provide the returning authorities with an explanation of their election-related expenses within a set number of days. However, this practice seldom affected the contenders, as they efficiently managed the more significant expenses by dividing money into various accounts before declaring their returns to the Election Commission.
- The prosecution for election offences is exceptionally rare, and it is disheartening to see that many violations of electoral laws, such as exceeding the campaign expenditure limits, go unpunished, which significantly undermines respect for the law.
- Addressing the major flaw in the legislation regarding election expenses is imperative. The current spending limits solely apply to candidates running for office, leaving

- political parties exempt. This unacceptable loophole necessitates the establishment of spending limits for political parties based on the number of seats they are contesting.
- Political parties spent billions of rupees during the election year 2018, which belies their claim of having limited financial standings that they declare in their annual statements of assets to ECP every year.

Conclusion

Political parties and the contestants used different techniques to attract voters during the campaign of 2018 general elections. However, the dominant factor that played a decisive role during canvassing was the usage of money, as the contenders spent lavishly on their campaigns.

Therefore, the electoral campaign of the 2018 general elections was the liveliest and most expensive. The candidates violated the provisions of the election expenses of the Election Act 2017. The budget of blanket advertising on electronic media by the leading parties ran into billions.

It is clearly evident when different journalists interviewed the contenders regarding their campaign spending, they used to hide the actual figures by giving unsatisfactory answers. Talking to Dawn, most prominent contenders claimed they had yet to find the quantity of money that they utilized in their campaign activities. According to a famous contestant from PML-N Muftah Ismail when asked about his spending, he replied, "My accounting staff significantly have a better understanding how much they were spending." "I'm concentrating only on conducting the campaign." He was conducting the campaign from the headquarters of Ismail Industries, a confectionary company managed by his family members. He claimed that his annual individual earnings were up to 100 million rupees. The PML-N, at the same time, was waging a statewide campaign through Television and in daily newspapers, yet they needed to raise their finances, according to Mr. Ismail. When questioned about the ECP's ceiling restrictions. He said he was unaware of what he was legally permitted to spend on canvassing. Applicants' inability or reluctance to determine the exact cost they were spending was also because a large portion of their funds was invisible.

When asked by a candidate of PTL, Ali Zaidi, who was conducting his election drive from the headquarters of Paragon Constructors, one of the country's major construction firms. When asked about the spending limitations, he replied that "I genuinely believed the ceiling caps were unrealistic. Furthermore, the contestants have to spend more than the prescribed limitations." When asked about his campaign spending and how he managed it, he replied; "I will be frank that certain friends used to donate them for electioneering. "They allowed us to utilize their vehicles. "If I begin to pay (for volunteers and vehicles), I'll be out of money in a week." The campaign vehicle he leased for one month was priced at Rs700,000, which included marketing costs, driver's gasoline, and repair or replacement. Each signage truck was charging 150,000 rupees. "Thus, 1 million rupees departed," he remarked. Therefore, he could not dispatch more trucks since he had to stay within a budget. However, he estimated that the overall expense of the campaign would be roughly Rs20 million.

The PPP's contestant, Waqar Akhtar Paganwala, stated that his political organization has yet to provide him with the necessary funding to win the election. According to his estimation, he had spent Rs2.8 million till four days before Election Day, and his overall spending was expected to be under the legal limit (Alam, 2018).

Finally, it was established by the numerous case studies conducted by different organizations that there was excessive spending during the election campaign period either due to ulterior motives or unawareness of campaign restrictions though parties tried to keep their finances under the table.

Recommendations

Thus, there has to be enough legislation to control the circulation of money. The more a state controls political donations, disclosures, expenditures, and public subsidies, the better regulated the political finance regime is thought to be. There is a need to adopt a plethora of policies to regulate money circulation in politics. These policies will surely enhance the overall efficiency of democratic system.

There are four types of regulations adopted in different countries to control the role of money in politics:

- **Transparency requirements:** The first category of policy regulations, transparency requirements, seeks to influence the fiscal accountability of political players. Its main aim is to reduce the use of “dark money” and includes rules for the publication of donor names, gifts amounts, and expenditures.
- **Contribution Restrictions:** Contribution restrictions are a second regulatory policy that tries to limit potential donors’ decisions, whether people or organizations, by prohibiting or capping financial donations. Donations from specific organizations, such as companies, trade unions, and foreign contributors, are prohibited. Donor limitations are primarily intended to reduce the dangers of improper influence resulting from political donations and stop back-door cronyism, favor-buying, and other unethical behaviors that undermine the democratic process.
- **Expenditure Ceilings:** The third group of policy interventions tries to control political players spending. Bans the purchasing of votes, in addition they also limit the misuse of public resources for personal benefit. Spending restrictions by political parties, organizations, or contestants for public office often apply during election campaigns, although they might be in effect at other times.
- **Public Subsidies:** The last type of regulation relates to public finance, whether it comes from the public’s coffer or indirectly via methods like free or discounted media access or tax advantages. Public funding may be unfettered or require candidates and parties to utilize the funds only for specific reasons, such as civic instruction, youth mobilization, and campaign marketing. Furthermore, the amount of funding may be evenly distributed among all qualified parties and candidates in the election, or it may be based on the proportion of votes and parliamentary representation obtained in prior elections. Subsidies may be generic or directed to certain tiers of party organizations, such as the main office or local offices. Finally, incentives may be used to support continuing legitimate activities of parties and applicants during elections.

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