

ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES DEPARTMENT

*Accuracy * Efficiency * Compliance * Credibility*

EBD Holds 5th in the Series National Dialogue for a Culture of Democracy in Collaboration with the University of Belize

The Elections and Boundaries Department, in conjunction with its voter education and community outreach efforts, held its 5th in the Series *National Dialogue for a Culture of Democracy*, in collaboration with the University of Belize (UB), on Wednesday, 20 October 2004, at the Lamanai Room, Radisson Fort George Hotel and Marina, Belize City.

“Distributed Governance - Widening the Sphere of Accountability” was the main theme to bring awareness pertaining to the participation of the electorate in the Registration Process. The three main objectives were to bring awareness to the importance of the role of the elector as the watchdog in the Registration Process, the importance of inclusivity to the Registration Process, and the importance of a supportive social environment to the Registration Process.

Three experts from the community, Ms. Lois Young, Senior Counsel, Mr. Dylan Vernon, Assistant Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme, and Honourable Godwin Hulse, Senator, presented to over two hundred persons comprised of Tertiary Level Students, Lecturers, Senior Public Officers, Union Representatives, Researchers, Political Agents and Activists, as well as members of the Private Sector. The

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EBD Holds 5th in the Series National Dialogue for a Culture of Democracy in Collaboration with the University of Belize (Cont'd)

topics presented were *Appeals, Objections, Scrutineering and Perusal: the Legal Perspective; Distributed Governance- the Responsibility of Participation; and Appeals, Objections, Scrutinizing and Perusal: the Practice.*

The Guest Speaker, Dr. Corinth Morter Lewis, President of the University of Belize, welcomed the collaboration of UB and the Elections and Boundaries Department and urged the participants, in particular the students, to take a proactive approach in the area of participation.

In her Welcome Remarks, Mrs. Myrtle Palacio, Chief Elections Officer, invited all to participate in the department's journey--the continued effort at Voter Education and Community Outreach. The Department, she said, "is in the election business, where failure is not an option." Mrs. Palacio challenged the students to empower themselves by knowing their rights and responsibilities under the law and practice pertaining to voter registration.

The Department has conducted workshops on *The Role of Stakeholders*, the *Registration Process*, the *Revision Process*, and *Boundary Delimitation*.

The department continues its effort to encourage public participation, forge partnerships and to provide efficient and effective service delivery.



Editorial



In November, the department celebrates its fifth anniversary since the launch of its Voter Education Campaign. Congratulations to each one of you who have contributed to the development and success of this programme. I applaud your efforts! Happy fifth anniversary.

As the end of the year approaches us, let us commit to continue to *live* our mission and share a vision for continuous improvement in 2005 and beyond. As we prepare for this year's Annual Retreat and General Assembly, let us take the time to reflect on our personal accomplishments and how they can contribute to the enhancement of the department. As a great philosopher once said, "let us become the change we want to see in the world."

Sharole R. Saldinax

Many Thanks

To

*Provost, President, Faculty & Student,
University of Belize
for Collaborating in 5th in the Series
National Dialogue for a Culture of
Democracy, held on 20 October 2004*

*Ms. Lois Young, Mr. Dylan Vernon &
Honourable Godwin Hulse
for Participating in 5th in the Series
National Dialogue for a Culture of
Democracy, held on 20 October 2004*

From

*Chief Elections Officer and Staff
Elections and Boundaries Department*



Mission

The Elections and Boundaries Department is committed to the enhancement of democracy through the promotion of voter education and the maintenance of a legitimate, impartial, valid electoral process.

THE WHAT AND HOW OF
BOUNDARY REDISTRICTING 2004

By Myrtle Palacio

What Is Boundary Redistricting?

Boundary Redistricting or Boundary Delimitation are terminologies used interchangeably for the process of fixing, drawing, altering and/or increasing electoral boundaries. It is done to decrease substantial differences in the population ratio between electoral divisions. A new Electoral List compiled at Re-registration in 1998, demonstrated a difference in population ratio between the largest and smallest Electoral Divisions of 3.5 to 1. By September 2003, the gap widened to 4.4 to 1. The growth of the Electoral Roll at September 2003 shows that **ten** Electoral Divisions have grown by 25% or more. Five of these are in the Belize District namely, Lake Independence, Queen's Square, Belize Rural South, Pickstock and Port Loyola, in ascending order. Of the remaining five, one is Orange Walk South and **all four** Electoral Divisions in the Cayo District. Boundary Redistricting is most commonly associated with majority electoral systems as ours. Success at the polls in the First Past the Post Electoral System (FPP) relies on garnering a majority number of single member constituencies.

Did This Happen Before?

The last Boundary Redistricting Exercise was conducted in **2002**. Then, all communities located in the Stann Creek District that were placed in the Toledo East Electoral Division were transferred to the Stann Creek West Electoral Division. The ultimate effect was the *redrawing* or *adjusting* of the boundaries of 2 Electoral Divisions -- Toledo East and Stann Creek West. The communities affected included the Villages of Independence and Placencia. Voters registered in these communities, voted in the Stann Creek West Electoral Division in March 2003. An increase in the number of Electoral Divisions occurred as follows: **1954** from 6 to 9; **1961** to 18; **1984** to 28; **1993** to 29

Electoral Boundaries were altered in the following constituencies:

1993 in *Port Loyola and Collet*

1997 in *Cayo Central and Cayo South*

1998 in *Belize District*: Caribbean Shores, Freetown, Fort George, Pickstock, Belize Rural Central

1998 in *Corozal District*: Corozal North, Corozal Bay, and Corozal South West

Orange Walk District: Orange Walk North, Orange Walk East, Orange Walk Central

Who Decides On Boundary Redistricting?

The Elections and Boundaries Commission makes proposals to the National Assembly, guided by Section 90 of the Belize Constitution. The National Assembly may accept all or part of the proposals submitted by the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The National Assembly, which consists of Members of the House of Representatives and Senate, makes the final decision. The Elections and Boundaries Commission consists of five Members headed by a Chairman as per Section 88 of the Belize Constitution.

What Is The Legal Framework?

The present legal guidelines as amended in 1988 are set out in Section 90 of the Belize Constitution.

Pre - 1988 Constitutional Amendment

"An electoral division shall consist of *not less than 2,000* and *not more than 3,000* registered electors"

Post - 1988 Constitutional Amendment

"Each electoral division shall have *as nearly as may be*, an equal number of persons eligible to vote"

Other Determinants:

- The total number of electoral divisions "***shall be, not less than 28***"
- Regard be given to transport, physical features, and other facilities of the electoral division
- The new electoral changes come into effect at the next General Elections held after the redistricting exercise

Interpretation of the Law:

The conclusion of the Solicitor General in a Report stated that

- The meaning of the phrase "*As nearly as may be*" as presently set out in section 90 (1) (a), was deliberately left for the determination by the Elections and Boundaries Commission to make proposals based on the population density.
- In so doing the Elections and Boundaries Commission is to consider physical features, transportation needs and other characteristics of each division.
- A division should have either a minimum number, or a maximum number of electors as determined by the Elections and Boundaries Commission

When Will The Public Be Made Aware Of The New Electoral Divisions?

The Representation of the People Act (ROPA), Chapter 9 of the Laws of Belize, states that after the redistricting becomes Law, the Chief Elections Officer of the Elections and Boundaries **Department** (EBD) is to:

- Adjust the Electoral Registers of the Electoral Divisions affected
- Compile new Registers of electors if there are new Electoral Divisions
- Within 30 days publish Provisional Registers

At the end of 10 days the Provisional Registers are revised at a Revision Court located in Magistrate Courts countrywide.

The EBD is headed by the Chief Elections Officer. It is an arm of government under the Ministry of the Public Service. All staff members are Public Officers as defined by the Belize Constitution.

Is There Gerrymandering In Belize?

Gerrymandering is a term coined in North America to reflect constituencies that are drawn to give advantage to one Political Party over the other, **or** to disproportionately favour one Political Party over the other. In the political history of Belize, this **has not** happened. Also voting patterns in Post-Independent Belize demonstrate:

- Frequent change of governments
- Change in the number of seats overwhelming on the side of the winning Political Party
- The winning Political Party barely garnering the popular vote

1984 - 53%; **1989** - 50%; **1993** - 48.7%; **1998** - 59.9%; **2003** - 52.75%

Boundary Redistricting Task Force Submits Final Report to Elections and Boundaries Commission

The final report of the second and final phase of the Boundary Redistricting Project (BRP) has been submitted to the Elections and Boundaries Commission by the three person task force comprising of Mr. Gadsby Ramos, Mr. Elson Kaseke, and Mr. Armin Cansino.

The Task Force's Terms of Reference, as summarized below for ease of reference, were seven guidelines as stipulated in the summary of recommendations from the first Task Force Report:

1. Set a tolerance limit of 15% for each constituency;
2. Utilize geographic and physical features such as roads, rivers, crests of hills, park and/or estate boundaries as the relevant features to define the limits of electoral boundaries and polling areas;
3. Maintain as far as possible electoral divisions within district administrative boundaries;
4. Keep adjustments to the minimum: transfer adjoining polling areas or part thereof from the division with excess to the division with deficiency;
5. Expand the Cayo District by 2 divisions to 6;
6. All boundaries to be contiguous and where it is not possible to utilize natural boundaries and physical features, geographic referencing should be used;
7. Include complete communities within polling areas where possible.

The Task Force's report can be viewed in its entirety on the Elections and Boundaries Department's website at www.belize-elections.org.

A comparative statistical analysis on the present and effects of proposed changes on Electoral Population , by Mrs. I. Myrtle Palacio, Chief Elections Officer, can be found on page 6 of this newsletter.



MOTTO

***ACCURACY EFFICIENCY
COMPLIANCE CREDIBILITY***

New Member of Elections and Boundaries Commission Sworn In

A new member of the Elections and Boundaries Commission was sworn in on 21 October 2004. Mr. Dean Lindo, Senior Counsel and Attorney-at-law, was sworn in by Chief Justice Abdulai Conteh, in the Chief Justice's chambers in Belize City.

Mr. Lindo was appointed by His Excellency the Governor-General, acting on the advice of the

Prime Minister, with the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lindo replaces Mr. Herbert Panton who resigned his position.



MY INFLUENCE

*Contributed by Ms. Carla Bennett
Assistant Registering Officer*



My life shall touch a dozen lives
Before this day is done;
Leave countless marks for good or ill,
Ere sets the evening sun.
So this is the wish I always wish,
The prayer I ever pray;
"Lord may my life help other lives
It touches by the way."

(Author Unknown)



ELECTORAL POPULATION*
AS AT SEPTEMBER 2003

DIVISION		ELECTORAL POPULATION		TOTAL
		PRESENT	PROPOSED	VARIANCE
10	Freetown	2524	3004	480
22	Caribbean Shores	4015	3535	-480
20	Pickstock	2018	3080	1062
30	Fort George	2068	3006	938
40	Albert	2289	3018	729
28	Queen's Square	2769	3538	769
60	Mesopotamia	2144	3169	1025
29	Lake Independence	6193	3564	-2629
50	Collet	2849	3487	638
31	Port Loyola	5783	3351	-2432
70	Belize Rural North	3343	3879	536
75	Belize Rural Central	4525	3889	-636
80	Belize Rural South	3713	3713	0
	RATIO	3.1 : 1	1.3 : 1	
21	Corozal Bay	5307	4278	-1029
90	Corozal North	4009	4497	488
11	Corozal South East	4763	4763	0
23	Corozal South West	3903	4444	541
	RATIO	1.3 : 1	1.1 : 1	
24	Orange Walk Central	3402	4790	1388
12	Orange Walk North	5029	5067	38
25	Orange Walk East	5485	4605	-880
13	Orange Walk South	5303	4757	-546
	RATIO	1.6 : 1	1.1 : 1	
14	Cayo North	6841	4611	-2230
26	Cayo Central	6040	4406	-1634
27	Cayo West	4682	4682	0
15	Cayo South	8813	4509	-4304
	New (mix of Cent & Nth)	0	3864	3864
	Belmopan (#86)	0	4304	4304
	RATIO	1.9 : 1	1.2 : 1	
16	Dangriga	4257	4713	456
17	Stann Creek West	5704	5248	-456
	RATIO	1.3 : 1	1.1 : 1	
19	Toledo East	4291	4291	0
18	Toledo West	4915	4915	0
	RATIO	1.1 : 1	1.1 : 1	
	TOTAL	126977	126977	0
	RATIO	4.4 : 1	1.7 : 1	

Source: Elections and Boundaries Department, October 2004

*A comparative statistical analysis on the Electoral Population present and effects of proposed changes for boundary redistricting. The figures are from the Report of the 2nd Task Force Appendix 3

Ratio Changes:

National - 4.4:1 to 1.7:1

Belize District - 3.1:1 to 1.3:1

No Changes:

Belize Rural South, Corozal South East, Cayo West, Toledo East, Toledo West

I. Myrtle Palacio

CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER

Staff Profile



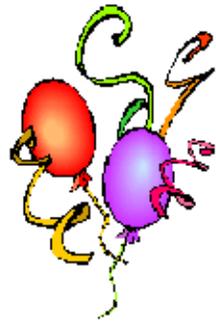
Mildred Martinez

On October 25, 1983 on a warm Wednesday morning around 9:30 the world was blessed with my birth. My name is Mildred Therese Martinez. I am the proud daughter of Mrs. Eleanor Martinez and Mr. Maurice Martinez, and the seventh of eight children.

I attended Holy Ghost Pre-school and then went on to Holy Ghost Primary School. In Standard Six I transferred to Zion Adventist Primary School where I ranked second in my class in the Belize National Selection Examination. In August of 1997, I furthered my education at Ecumenical High School and graduated in June 2001. In February 2002, I was honoured at the CXC award ceremony held in Belize City. Later, on a tuition scholarship, I attended Ecumenical Junior College where I have completed two semesters.

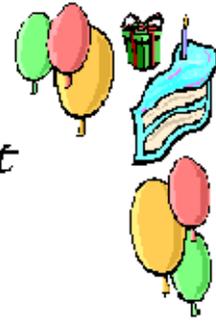
In 2002, I was blessed with the birth of my son Bryon Anigie Guzman. On the 23 December of the same year, I was given the chance to work at Elections and Boundaries Department as Temporary Assistant Registering Officer. This was a hectic time because the department was preparing for the 2003 elections. From December 2003 to April 2004 I was given the privilege to hold over the Dangriga Office. Although my time with the department has been short, I have seen many difficulties overcome by working together as a unified team. My experience so far at Elections and Boundaries Department has been both very exciting and challenging at the same time. After working for almost two years at this department, I can honestly say that I have grown both as an individual and as a professional.

Staff Corner



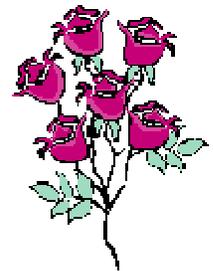
Happy Birthday

*Gustavo Mildred Thomas Sherlett
Tyrone Shellaine*



Welcome

Julia



Happy Garifuna Settlement Day

19 November 2004

from

*Chief Elections Officer and Staff
Elections and Boundaries Department*



Annual Staff Retreat and General Assembly to be Held on 17 December 2004

Staff countrywide will be culminating for the department's fifth Annual Staff Retreat and General Assembly on Friday, 17 December 2004 at Old Belize on the Western Highway. The theme for this

year's event is *None of Us is as Good as All of Us: Each One Teach One, Empowerment for Success*.

Mr. Carl Smith, former Director, Management Service Division, Ministry of the Public Service, will be facilitating the event. Staff will be apprised of developments within the department, and topical areas of interest will be presented by experts including Dra. Claudina Cayetano, who will present on the topic *How to Deal With Stress*, and Magistrate Margaret Nicholas, who will present on *Legal Issues Concerning the Family - - Child and Spouse Maintenance, Divorce and Common law union*.

The highlight of the day will be the staff's participation in developing the department's vision statement and the announcement of staff awards including the Most Productive Officer Award, Award for Most Initiative, Best Community Outreach Award, and the coveted Staff of the Year Award. This will be followed by the traditional Christmas luncheon.

The objectives of the department's Staff Retreat and General Assembly are to build capacity by bringing all staff together for open exchange, to foster development through divergent viewpoints, and to create consensus around future development activities.



Goal

To encourage public participation, forge partnerships and to provide efficient and effective service delivery.



Recipe Corner

Black Fruit Cake



1 lb. Butter, 2 lbs. Brown sugar, 1 pt. Stout, 1/2 pt. Caramel colouring, 1 qt. Rum, 1 lb. each of raisins, prunes, currants, citron, dates, cherries, mixed peel and pecans; 8 eggs, 2 lbs. Flour, 1 tsp. Baking powder, 1 tsp. Allspice, 1 tsp. Nutmeg, 1 lb. Brown sugar for stewing fruits.

METHOD: Cream butter with sugar; add eggs one at a time. Add flour, baking powder and spices alternately with stout and colouring. Finally, add fruit that has been stewed well with rum and sugar. Line cake pans with brown paper. Fill about 3/4 full. Bake in very slow oven (275 degrees) for about three hours.

"The game of life is the game of boomerangs. Our thoughts, deeds and words return to us sooner or later, with astounding accuracy." Florence Shinn

"We can learn to be self-defining. We can learn not to ask others to form our identities for us. Then we can be truly free and bring the gift of ourselves to any relationship." Unknown

"When we change ourselves to fit into a situation, we may be depriving that situation of the very element it needs to become what it can become." Unknown



Publications



Brochures

About Us Voter Registration - All You Want To Know
The Election Process The Referendum Act
Boundary Redistricting

Reports

End of Year Report 1999 Annual Report 2000
Annual Report 2001 Annual Report 2002
Accomplishments in Financial Management 1999 - 2003
Voter Education and Community Outreach Initiatives 1999 - 2004
Report on the Elections: Parliamentary, City and Town Council April 2003
Report on Cayo South By - Elections November 2003
Annual Report 2003

Manuals

Policies and Procedures on the EBC Database System Administrative Manual
Election Day Guidelines for Polling Agents Guide To Election Officials
A Guide For New Entrants A Quick Reference For Registering Officers
Writing for the Office: A Guide for Staff

Books

Selecting Our Leaders – Past and Present
A Framework For Voter Education

Calendar 2004

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Visit the EBC library corner in your area!!!