

On Elections to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus

In compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus the Parliament – the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus – is a representative legislative body of the Republic of Belarus.

The Parliament consists of two houses: the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic. The term of powers of the Parliament is four years.

The composition of the House of Representatives is 110 deputies.

Deputies of the House of Representatives are elected in one-mandate electoral constituencies directly by citizens. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus determines that elections shall be free and held on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

Certain requirements to citizens intending to nominate for deputies of the House of Representatives are established in the legislation:

- 1) citizenship of the Republic of Belarus;
- 2) age of at least 21;
- 3) permanent residence in the territory of the Republic of Belarus;
- 4) clean criminal record.

A deputy of the House of Representatives may be a member of the Government at the same time. However, the same person may not be a member of two houses of the Parliament. A deputy of the House of Representatives may not be a deputy of the local Council of Deputies. It is not permitted to combine offices of a deputy of the House of Representatives and the President or a judge at the same time.

The procedure of holding the elections to the House of Representatives is determined by the Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus.

Elections to the House of Representatives of new convocation are appointed by the President of the Republic of Belarus no later than four months and held no later than 30 days prior to termination of powers of the House of Representatives of the current convocation.

Administration of the electoral process is carried out by electoral commissions.

Holding the elections to the House of Representatives is ensured by the following electoral commissions:

the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda (further referred to as the Central Commission);
territorial electoral commissions – regional, Minsk City;
constituency electoral commissions;
precinct electoral commissions.

Regional, Minsk City territorial as well as constituency commissions are formed by presidiums of regional, Minsk City Councils of Deputies and the respective executive committees, and precinct commissions are formed by district, city (in regional cities) executive committees as well as local administrations (in towns and cities with district division).

Regional, Minsk City territorial, constituency and precinct commissions are formed from representatives of political parties, other public associations, labour collectives as well as representatives of citizens. Herewith, the number of representatives of political parties and other public associations shall be, as a rule, no less than one third of the commission's composition, and the number of state officials – no more than one third of its composition. Besides, judges, prosecutors, heads of local executive and regulatory bodies may not be in the composition of a commission.

A citizen may be nominated as a candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives only in one electoral constituency.

The right to nominate candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives belongs to three entities: political parties, labour collectives as well as citizens by means of collecting signatures.

Nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives from political parties is carried out by supreme bodies of the political parties.

A political party is entitled to nominate only one candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives for each electoral constituency from the number of members of this political party.

Nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives from labour collectives is carried out at meetings (conferences) of voters in labour collectives.

Nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives by collecting signatures is carried out by initiative groups of citizens. Registration of the initiative groups is carried out by the respective constituency commissions.

When nominating a candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives by collecting signatures the initiative shall be supported no less than by 1, 000 voters residing in the electoral constituency.

A person nominated as a candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives, shall submit to the constituency commission the documents required for his/ her registration as a candidate. The list of these documents is provided in the Electoral Code.

A constituency commission shall check compliance of the procedure of nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives with the requirements of the electoral legislation and shall take a decision on registration of candidates for deputies or a reasoned decision on refusal of registration. A decision of the constituency commission on refusal of registration as well as a

decision on refusal of registration of an initiative group may be appealed against in the respective regional, Minsk City territorial commission, and a decision of regional, Minsk City territorial commission on refusal of registration of a candidate or refusal of registration of an initiative group may be appealed against respectively in the regional, Minsk City court.

The procedure of holding electoral campaigns is regulated in detail in the Electoral Code. Propaganda may be carried out in the following forms: use of mass media, production and dissemination of propaganda printed materials, holding meetings with voters, including mass events.

All candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives are provided with the right to free statements on state-owned television and radio broadcasting, participation in TV debates, free publication of their election programmes in press. The number and length of statements by candidates on state-owned television and radio broadcasting are determined by the Central Commission.

The state defrays the expenses for production of collective posters with biography data about candidates and information materials about candidates, it provides candidates with free of charge premises for meetings with voters.

Candidates and their authorised persons for the purpose of electoral campaign may hold mass events (meetings outside premises, rallies, picketing) within the notice procedure.

Candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives are entitled to establish their own electoral funds for financing expenses for electoral propaganda. The Electoral Code establishes the expenditure limits from finances of the electoral fund: no more than 1, 000 base units. Candidates for deputies may use finances from electoral funds to cover expenses directly related to holding electoral propaganda, within the procedure established by the Central Commission.

The final stage of the campaign of electing deputies of the House of Representatives is voting and count of votes of the electorate.

As to ensure exercise of electoral rights of citizens, who on the election day will have no opportunity to come to the voting premises, the electoral legislation stipulates the early voting not earlier than five days prior to the election as well as voting at the location of citizens who due to their state of health or any other reasonable excuse cannot come on the elections day to the premises of voting.

Citizens travelling abroad may vote at the voting precincts, which will be formed by the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Belarus. Citizens have the right to vote at the voting precincts of their temporary staying and residing: in health resort centres, preventive clinics, recovery centres, hospitals and other health facilities providing institutional medical care, in military units.

Voting at the election is secret: a voter fills in a ballot in a booth or a room for secret ballot.

For the purpose of ensuring the open and transparent electoral process, the Electoral Code provides that authorised persons of candidates, observers, including the ones from foreign states and international organisations, mass media representatives may be present when conducting all types of voting and when counting votes. The candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives may be present at voting precincts at the count of votes.

The majority electoral system of the relevant majority is used for determining the election results. The election deems to have taken place if over a half of all voters of the constituency, included in the lists of citizens having the right to vote have taken part in voting.

A candidate for deputies of the House of Representatives deems elected if he/ she received the majority vote of the voters, who have taken part in voting. When holding voting for one nominee, the candidate deems elected if he/ she received more than a half of all votes of voters, who have taken part in voting.

The results of the election of deputies of the House of Representatives are established by the Central Commission on the basis of the protocols of constituency commissions, and then it publishes a message about these results.