

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION (ELECS.F) DEPARTMENT

Memo.No.532/Elecs.F/2006-140

Dt.16.03.2007

Sub: Voting by illiterate persons – Certain instructions – Reg.

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Para 29.1 of Chapter XI of the Hand Book for Returning Officers for elections to State Legislative Council describes assistance to be provided in voting by Illiterate, Blind and Infirm Voters. It states "If you are satisfied that owing to illiteracy, blindness or other physical infirmity, a voter is unable to read the names of candidates on the ballot paper or to record his vote without assistance, you should permit the voter to take a companion with him". The paragraph also states that no person can act as a companion of more than one elector at any polling station on the same day and such companion should make a declaration to the effect that he will maintain secrecy of vote.

Certain apprehensions have been expressed that this provision may be misused by unscrupulous elements to ensure that voters vote in a particular way. It is apprehended that literate voters will declare themselves as illiterate and take the assistance of a companion and jeopardise the secrecy of voting procedure.

The Handbook for Returning Officers clearly stipulates that the Presiding Officers should be satisfied that the voter who seeks a companion is illiterate. Such a companion will not be required for voters in graduates' and teachers' constituencies. In respect of Local Authorities constituencies, one responsible person from the Office of the Local Authority concerned will be present in the polling station to identify the electors. These officers should be made responsible to ensure that the system of providing companion voters to illiterate voters is not misused by literate voters. These officers should also be informed that stringent action will be initiated against them if they fail to scrupulously implement these instructions.

Please deliver a copy of these instructions to the Observers for Local Authorities constituencies attached to your district.

V.BHASKAR  
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER &  
E.O. PRL. SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

To  
All District Collectors  
All Joint Collectors.