

A.P.Legislative Council Elections
Circular No. 8

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

Memo No. 217/Elecs.F/2007-2

Dated: 02.02.2007

Sub:- A.P. Legislative Council – Elections to Council Constituencies – Distribution of polling material, reception, Storage of polled ballot boxes and steps to be taken prior to commencing counting – Instructions – Issued.

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The procedure for appointment of polling personnel, postal ballots, issue of public notice for the election, nominations, printing of ballot papers, arrangements for the poll, notices displayed at polling station etc., has been detailed in the Hand Book for Returning Officers (Elections to the Council of States & State Legislative Councils). All the Returning Officers are requested to follow the instructions contained therein for compliance.

Every District Election Officer is required to identify, train and deploy the sufficient number of polling staff such as Presiding Officers, Polling officers, as he thinks necessary, for each polling station within his district. The training shall be undertaken using the "Handbook of instructions to Presiding Officers for elections to the A.P.Legislative Council" as the basis. At least two training sessions shall be held. According to Para 3 of Chapter-II of the Hand Book for Returning Officers (Elections to the Council of States & State Legislative Councils), in cases where a council constituency extends over more than one district, the Returning Officer of the Constituency will adopt the lists sent by the other District Election Officers and make the appointments.

Distribution & Reception of election material :

The required number of statutory & non-statutory forms, paper seals and covers have already been distributed to the District Election Officers. The DEOs should verify that the material is adequate to supply all the polling stations in his district (graduates', teachers' & local authorities' constituencies). All District Election Officers should ensure that they have adequate ballot boxes to meet the requirement of all polling stations in the district (graduates', teachers' & local authorities' constituencies) as well as reserve ballot boxes. Apart from this, other items required have to be procured locally by the respective District Election Officers, so as to distribute the same to the polling parties at distribution centres, a day prior to the poll. Particular attention should be bestowed on procuring good quality sketch pens which will be used for marking preferences on the ballot paper. As per E.C.I. instructions, sketch pens with violet ink only should be used for marking on the ballot papers. It should be ensured that good quality pens which are freshly manufactured are only procured for supply to polling stations. As this is the first time in two decades that the Polling Officer will be issuing a pen for marking a preference, precise estimates of pens required will be very difficult to make. Pens can be procured at the rate of 1 pen for every 50 ballots. Further

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the route officers should carry at least 25% of the requirement for the polling stations in their route with them and examine the status of usage of pens in particular during their visits to the polling stations. Since sketch pens of only violet colour should be used, DEOs should make arrangements for procurement of the pens well in advance to ensure that they are supplied good quality single colour (violet) pens.

The distribution centres shall also be the reception centres for receipt of the polled ballot boxes and other material. The DEO should decide the number of such centres. If it is set up division-wise, the R.D.O. will be responsible for distribution of the material and reception of the polled ballot boxes and other material at sub-divisional level. Form 16 is to be verified by reception center RDO. For common polling booths, there will be two Forms 16-one for teachers' constituency and one for graduates' constituency. This should be entered in Total Votes Polled (Form No 1 in Manual for Counting) after verification. The Form 16 (for each polling station as well as Form 1 – Total Votes Polled for all the polling stations (one for graduates' constituency, one for teachers' constituency) within the jurisdiction should be sent with the polled ballot boxes to the counting center. The other material shall also be verified and received as detailed in the Returning Officers Handbook.

Storage of polled ballot boxes of Graduates' & Teachers' Constituencies:

On receipt of Polled ballot boxes on the poll day and after verification, they shall be stored in two intermediate strong rooms at the reception center itself- one for boxes received from polling stations meant for graduates constituency and polling stations common to graduates and teachers constituencies and the other for boxes received from polling stations meant for teachers constituency. Polled ballot boxes of the common polling stations for Graduates' & Teachers' Constituencies shall be stored in graduates strong room in a separate grid layout. Similarly the Presiding Officers diary for common polling stations should be carefully secured as it pertains to two constituencies. In the teachers strong room, a separate grid layout to be made for polled ballot boxes of common stations with an indication that the boxes of common polling stations would be stored in the strong room meant for graduates constituency. In respect of polling stations in the Returning Officer's district, the polled ballot boxes can be directly stored in the strong rooms without any intermediate storage if considered feasible.

Shifting of polled ballot boxes to the Strong room at Counting Centre of Graduates' & Teachers' constituencies:

The R.D.O. shall shift these polled ballot boxes as well as sealed statutory/non-statutory covers in trunks under armed escort to the Counting center at the returning officers headquarters on the day after the poll after intimating the Returning Officer in advance. The Returning Officer should inform all contesting candidates about the place of intermediate storage as well as final storage at the appropriate time. The contesting candidates should be informed about the date and time when the polled ballot boxes will be shifted to the Strong Room of the Counting Centre so that they can accompany the convoy if they feel it necessary. The candidates should be allowed to put their representatives outside the strong

room and also fix their own seals on the intermediate as well as final strong room. The D.R.O. of the district, who is the Assistant Returning Officer will accompany the trunk carrying the ballot boxes to the R.O. District counting centre and assist in placing the boxes in the strong room. He will remain in the R.O. District counting hall to assist the R.O. if he so desires, during counting / providing records etc.

Strong Room Storage at Counting center for Graduates' & Teachers Constituency:

The Returning Officer should establish two strong rooms preferably adjacent rooms - one for Graduates', one for Teachers. If necessary, there can be two strong rooms for every district in the constituency so that representatives from that district can be made responsible for storage and removal of ballot boxes from their respective strong rooms.

The Returning Officer shall identify the polling station numbers of the booths which are common for both graduates and teachers. Though the booth will be the same, the polling station number may be different for the graduates constituency and the teachers constituency. He shall prepare the strong room ballot box layout indicating the common polling booths numbers in a separately numbered layout - clearly marking space for common polling booths. The remaining polling stations- which are dedicated polling stations for either teachers or graduates should be in a separate grid layout.

Common polling stations ballot box(s) should be stored in the graduates constituency strong room only (see Chapter XII Page 216). They are not to be stored in the teachers strong room. In the grid layout in the teachers constituency strong room - for the common booths the words 'Common Booth-polling box in the graduates constituency strong room' should be clearly marked.

Counting arrangements for Graduates' & Teachers' Constituencies:

The arrangements for counting (Including appointment of agents etc) are detailed in Chapter XII of the Handbook for ROs. There should be a maximum of 15 tables including the R.O's table for the preliminary counting work. This number can be less depending upon the size of the hall and the need to restrict the number of candidate agents in the room as the main counting will be done only at the ROs table. The process for preliminary counting will be as follows:

- a. Scrutiny of postal ballots will commence at the R.O's table. Simultaneously, examine all the polled ballot boxes at the beginning itself to confirm that all the seals are intact and the boxes have not been tampered with. After all the polled ballot boxes are examined, they should be returned to the strong room to their appropriate places.
- b. After the initial verification of the polled ballot boxes, and return to the strong room, opening of individual ballot box at each table can be taken up. Each table should have a polling station wise allotment for counting.
- c. Start first with the common polling booths at each table. The boxes relating to the common polling booths will be opened at the graduates counting hall. The teachers' constituency counting hall supervisors will

wait for the receipt of ballot papers from the graduates counting hall for their respective polling stations. Since the polling station numbers for the graduates and teachers constituency for the same booth may be different, a chart should be prepared beforehand indicating the location of the common booth, the polling station number for the graduates constituency as well as the polling station number for the teachers constituency. Each counting supervisor in the teachers counting hall should know the polling booth number of the graduates constituency and the table number of the graduates constituency counting hall from where he will receive the ballot papers earmarked for his table. Also vice versa. Each Supervisor in the graduates' constituency counting hall should know which table in the teachers' constituency counting hall a particular common polling booth teachers' ballot papers should be transferred to.

- d. Only after ballot papers relating to common booths have been counted both in the graduate's hall as well as the teacher's counting hall, graduates only and teacher's only ballot boxes should be opened. The RO should closely monitor the counting of common ballot boxes, transfer of ballot papers to the teachers counting hall etc. and only after his specific authorization should counting of graduates only and teachers only ballot boxes be taken up. In all cases the ballot papers should be carefully counted with respect to the table allotment made previously. It should be tallied with the number of votes entered in Part I of Form 16 by the Presiding Officer. Discrepancies if any should be reconciled. Entries should be made in the appropriate place in Part II of Form 16 (though the candidate wise entry cannot be made as counting has not commenced, the total can be filled)
- e. The teacher's ballot papers from the common polling booths should be transferred to the teachers counting hall along with the filled up Form 16 relating to the teachers votes.

After completion of the above procedure, the counting of ballot papers of the graduates only and teachers only ballot boxes in the respective counting halls will be taken up. After completion of counting of ballot papers polling station-wise, mix all ballot papers (including postal ballot papers) of all polling stations properly and distribute the ballot papers to the candidates as per the preferences marked thereon.

Preliminary Counting for Graduates' & Teachers' Constituencies:

The Manual for Voting and Counting earlier distributed mentions that all counting – including validation of votes and arranging first preference votes candidate wise should be done at the ROs table only. Please refer to Chapter XII of the RO's Handbook (page 217). At the discretion of the RO if the number of votes is large, the process of sorting out ballot papers candidate wise with reference to the first preference votes after all the votes are mixed may be done at different counting tables. If this path is adopted, the RO should ensure that the counting supervisors as well as the counting staff are well trained and scrupulous in their work to ensure that the categorization of valid and invalid votes as well as

candidate wise votes is done accurately. If any invalid ballots are discovered at this stage of sorting, they should be carefully segregated and put up for the ROs confirmation.

Distribute the valid ballots Candidate-wise and bundle them in convenient bundles of 25 / 50. Transfer all the invalid ballots as well as the trays with the valid ballots to the ROs table. The RO will scrutinize the ballot papers received from all the counting tables- both the invalid ballot papers as well as the candidate wise valid ballot papers. The RO will then enter the Status sheet after first round, determine the number of valid votes as well as calculate quota.

After this stage, the counting tables will not be required as all the work will take place at the ROs table only. The RO may direct removal of the counting tables from the counting hall if convenient. He may also consider asking the excess staff in the hall (who were working at the counting tables) as well as excess counting agents to leave the hall. The persons in the hall will be those staff and agents sitting at the ROs table as well as other persons authorized by ECI.

Further rounds of counting will take place at only one table under the supervision of the Returning Officer. Counting shall be conducted in the manner described in "Manual for voting & counting in council elections" already distributed to all District Election Officers.

The eight Returning Officers (Collector, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Guntur, Chittoor, Anantapur, Karimnagar, Nalgonda & the Commissioner, M.C.H.) should immediately send proposals for counting hall which meets the above requirements. The proposals should be in the proforma prescribed by E.C.I. The proposals should also include:

- i) Location of intermediate storage of polled ballot boxes in each of the three or four districts of the constituency. For the headquarters district, the Collector can consider directly receiving the polled ballot boxes in the designated strong room without any intermediate storage if considered feasible.
- ii) When the ballot boxes will be moved to the counting centre headquarters, distance to be traveled, mode of transport, estimated time taken, time and date proposed for transfer as well as arrival etc.

These proposals should be prepared by R.O.-Collector in coordination with other Collectors of districts in his constituency.

Local Authorities Constituencies:

These constituencies are located district-wise. The number of polling stations for the constituency will be limited in number . The counting hall also need not be as large as the graduates'/teachers' constituency counting hall as the number of voters is also limited.

The distribution and reception centre should be located at the same place as the counting hall and the strong room. Ballot boxes / polling material will be distributed at each district headquarter by the Returning Officer to the polling staff for polling stations in his district.

Polled ballot boxes etc., will be stored after the poll in the strong room near the counting hall.

The Returning Officer (all Joint Collectors and Commissioner, M.C.H) should immediately send proposals for location of the counting centre which meets the requirements detailed above. The proposals should be sent in the proforma prescribed by E.C.I.

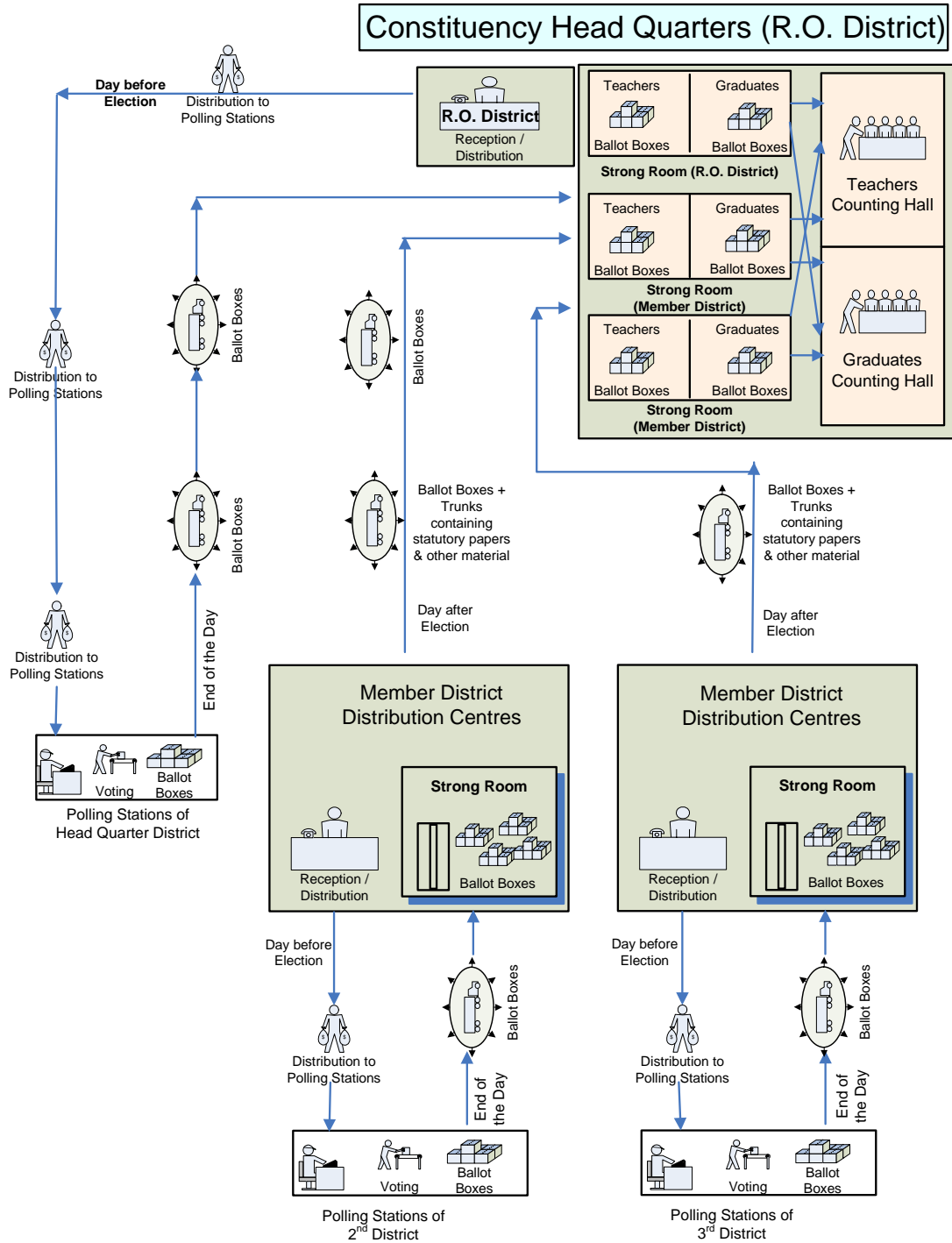
All the Returning Officers of the Council Constituencies are, therefore, requested to identify the distribution & reception and counting centres in consultation with the District Election Officers. They should also forward the proposal for counting centres in the proforma prescribed by the E.C.I. for elections to the HOP/APLA., along with layouts of the strong rooms, counting centres and counting hall immediately on the lines indicated above.

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

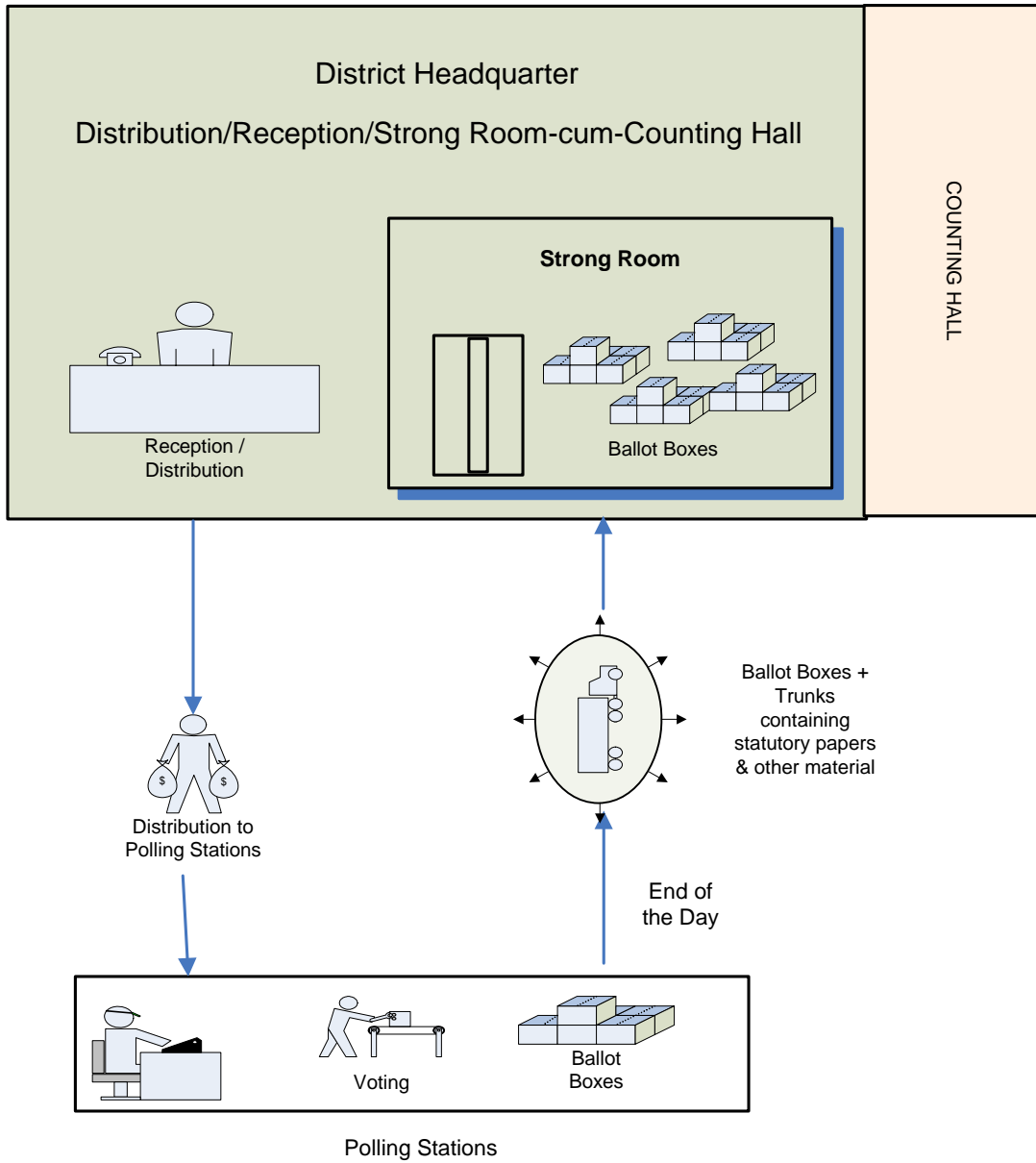
To
The Returning Officers of Council Constituencies.
All Collectors & District Election Officers
The Commissioner, M.C.H., & DEO., Hyderabad.

//Forwarded :: By Order//

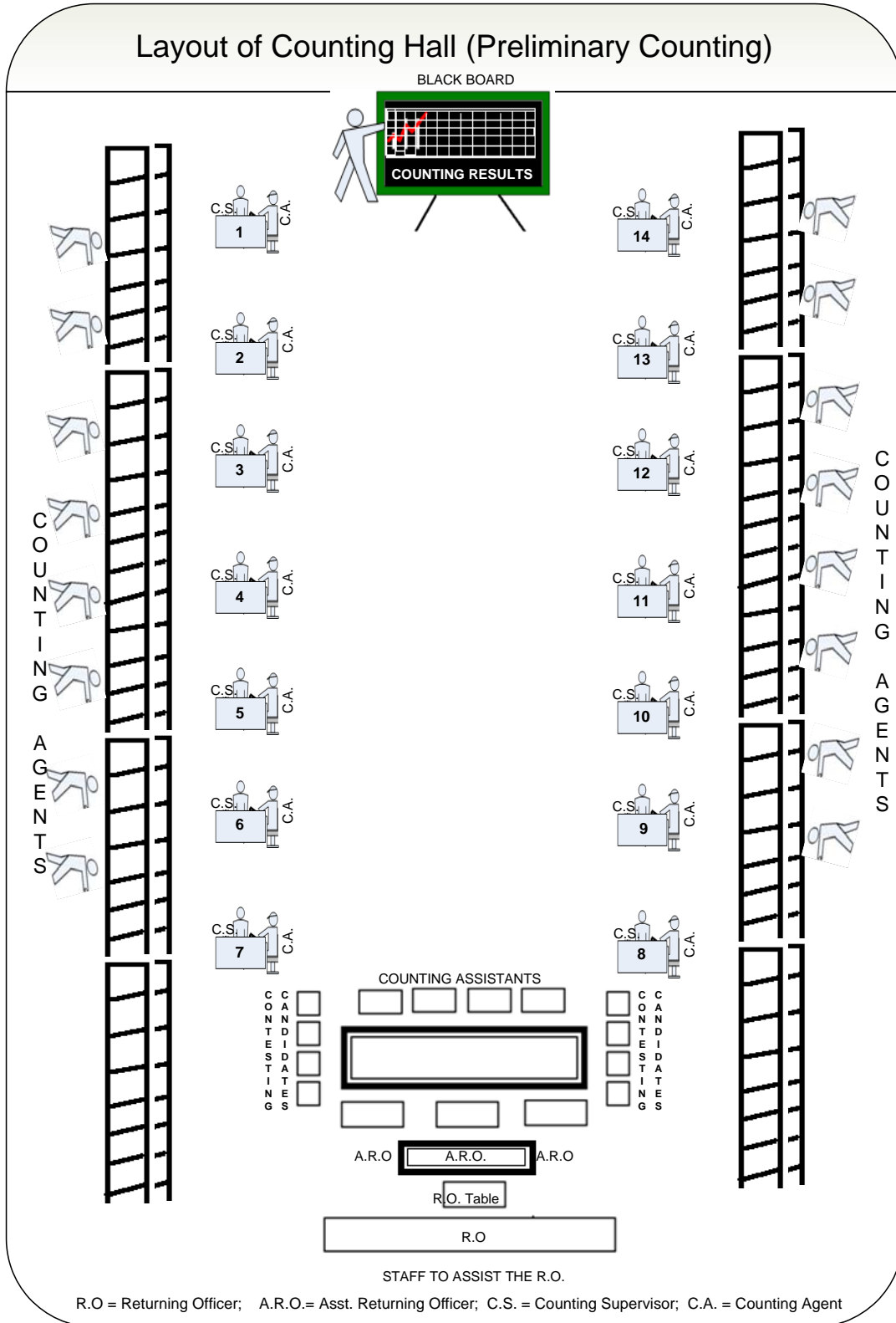
SECTION OFFICER



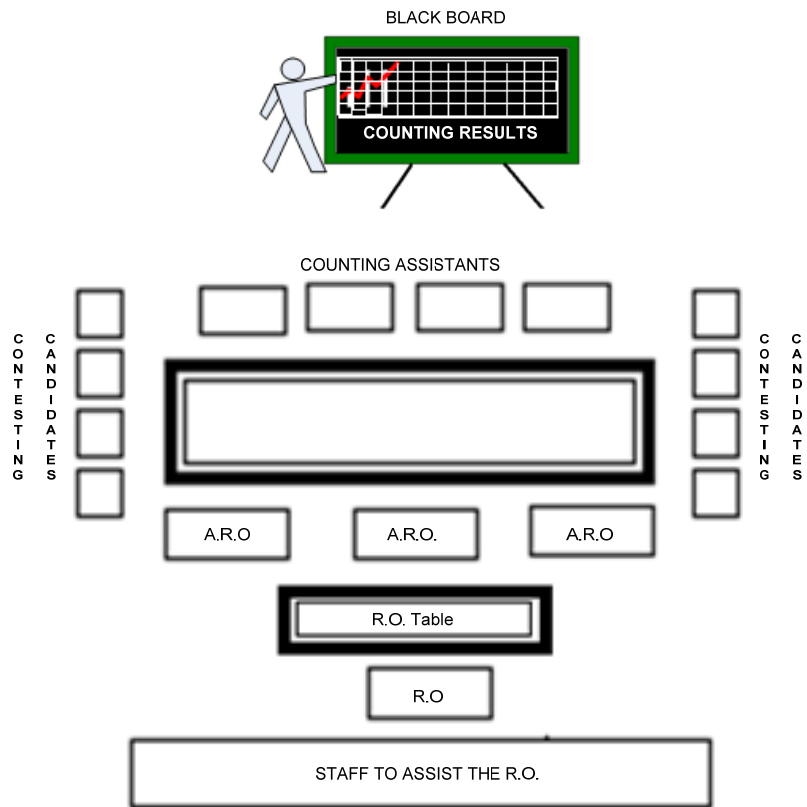
Local Authorities Constituency



Layout of Counting Hall (Preliminary Counting)



Layout of Counting Hall (after Preliminary Counting)



R.O = Returning Officer; A.R.O.= Asst. Returning Officer; C.S. = Counting Supervisor; C.A. = Counting Agent