

Citizenship proof needed to register

Many other changes made to election laws

By Steve Limtiaco

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Significant changes were made to the island's election laws this year, but the only noticeable change for voters is the registration process, which requires proof of citizenship.

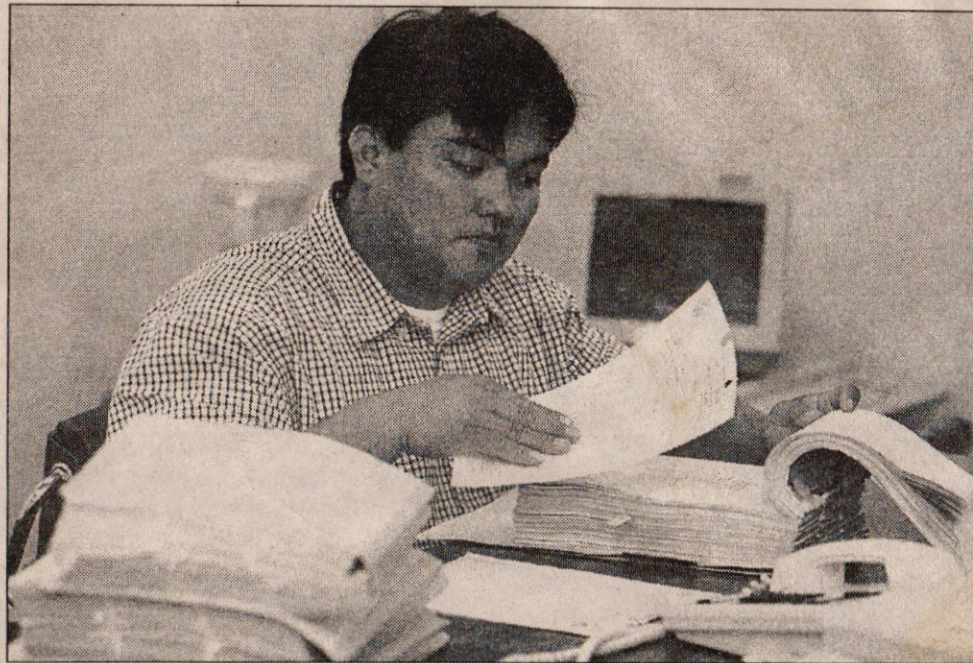
About 9,000 voters have been dropped from the rolls since the 1998 General Election, including 8,601 people who did not vote in that election, said Gerald Taitano, Guam Election Commission executive director. As of July 13, there were 48,904 registered voters, he said.

Those who want to re-register, or who are registering for the first time, now are required to provide proof of citizenship because of the election reform law, he said.

In past elections, voters were required to sign a document certifying their U.S. citizenship, but did not have to show proof.

The Legislature passed the election reform law in response to allegations that non-citizens and other unqualified people voted in the last General Election. Several precincts reported discrepancies between the number of ballots and the number of voters who signed in at the polls.

The commission has listed several acceptable forms of identification that must be presented when registering, such as passports, birth certificates and naturalization documents.



Victor Consaga/For Pacific Daily News

Updating voter list: Brian Manglona, a clerk at the Guam Election Commission, updates the voter registry yesterday at the GEC office in Hagåtña. Voting rules and regulations have changed since the 1998 General Election.

Also, volunteer registrars and precinct officials now must take a class and pass a test before they can work, Taitano said.

Some registrars already have taken the test, and the commission currently is drafting the examination for precinct officials, which will be ready next week, Taitano said.

New regulations also will affect the handling of ballots at the polling place, Taitano said. Ballot boxes will be locked as soon as the polls open and can only be unlocked by Taitano or the commission deputy director, a position currently vacant.

Precinct officials will not be

allowed to use personal vehicles to drive ballot boxes to the polling site at the university, Taitano said, and must ride there in government-provided buses under police escort.

The commission's board plans to move the tabulation center from the university's computer center to the field house to accommodate election workers.

Four new tabulating machines—which cost \$235,000—will be used to replace the six machines that have been used during the past three decades, Taitano said.

One of the driving forces behind the new election law is election commission member

Doug Moylan, who worked with the commission's staff to revise election rules.

Most of the changes were adopted by the Legislature in the reform act, Moylan said yesterday.

"It's going to eliminate a lot of the problems we saw in the last election, but it could create new problems if we don't implement it correctly," Moylan said.

Taitano said election reform law requires the commission to develop a new election manual after this year's elections.

He said it appears the commission will have enough funding and personnel to handle the elections.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Guam Election Commission is scheduled to meet at noon today at the GCIC building in Hagåtña, to discuss preparations for the Sept. 2 primary election.

How to register

Where:

▲ The election commission office, on the second floor of the GCIC building in Hagåtña, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

▲ At village mayors' offices, at least 21 days before an election.

▲ Public high schools, Guam Community College, the University of Guam; or with a deputized volunteer registrar.

Who:

▲ Legal residents of Guam who are U.S. citizens and who will be at least 18 years old by election day.

▲ Prisoners, the insane or those in mental institutions cannot register.

▲ Registration deadline is Aug. 24 for the primary election, Oct. 27 for the General Election.

Proof of citizenship:

▲ One of the following: U.S. passport; certificate of U.S. citizenship; certificate of naturalization.

▲ Or one of these documents: birth certificate; Native American tribal document, U.S. citizen ID card; government of Guam Cedula; plus one of these documents: driver's license; state or federal ID, school ID card with photograph; voter's registration card; U.S. military card or draft record; military dependent ID card; Coast Guard Merchant Mariner card.

Source: Guam Election Commission