



**YOUR X IS YOUR SAY**

## **REVISED UNIVERSAL BALLOT TEMPLATES FOR LONGER BALLOT PAPERS**

3 MAY 2019

Centurion – Voting aids for visually impaired and special needs voters have been created to accommodate the record length ballot papers for the 2019 National and Provincial Elections on 8 May.

The Electoral Commission has modified the traditional cardboard Universal Ballot Templates (UBTs) to fit the newly designed 2019 national and provincial ballot papers, of which there are 8 different lengths:

- National ballot template for 48 parties
- Gauteng template for 36 parties
- Limpopo and Western Cape templates for 34 parties each
- KwaZulu-Natal template for 31 parties
- North West template for 29 parties
- Free State and Mpumalanga templates for 28 parties each
- Eastern Cape template for 26 parties
- And Northern Cape template for 21 parties.

The 2019 ballot papers have been redesigned to enable easy identification of the party of choice by the voter, to facilitate the selection of that party with confidence and to minimise risks of miscast ballots. Party identifiers are far more distinct and the sequence of party identifiers on the ballot paper has also been re-ordered.

After 2011, (when a plastic UBT was used), the steady increase in parties and candidates contesting general elections necessitated the development of customized

cardboard templates. Each iteration progressively improved usability, resulting in the Electoral Commission winning a United Nations award for the UBT in 2015 in Vienna, Austria – the *'Innovative Practice for Independent Living for Persons with Disabilities Award'*.

The templates have windows numbered in Braille and with numbers in large white font so that people with different tactile, literacy, reading and sight levels can use the same template.

Both the ballot papers and the templates have a tactile recognition feature to assist visually impaired voters with the correct alignment of the ballot paper in the template. Ballot papers have a circular hole punched in the bottom left corner. All the templates have a built-in tactile feature on the top right-hand corner.

All voting stations will be supplied with two (2) templates, one UBT with 48 windows to accommodate the national ballot, and the other UBT for the respective provincial ballot. Electoral officials have been trained to assist visually impaired voters in their use. Instructions to Presiding Officers also appear on the back of the templates.

Visually impaired voters may request the assistance of the Presiding Officer or a family member or friend to help them cast their ballot for the party of their choice. They may also opt to use the UBT independently.

For partially-sighted and sighted voters, the Commission has developed A0 posters showing the national ballot and the provincial ballot. These will be displayed in each voting station to help the voters easily distinguish the different parties on the ballot list.

The Commission will continue to consult with blind persons' organisations and key stakeholders in the best interests of increasing access to the vote and to independent voting for the visually impaired and those with special needs.

## **ISSUED BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

*Ensuring free and fair elections*

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**For media interviews with Electoral Commission officials please email requests to [spokesperson@elections.org.za](mailto:spokesperson@elections.org.za)**

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