

**ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN**

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**ELECTION CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CANDIDATES**

*4th Local Government Elections: Dzongkhag Thromde Tshogde Elections, 2026*

**Phuentshogling and Thimphu**

**June 2026**

**Table of Contents**

**ELECTION CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CANDIDATES** ..... 1

1. Purpose..... 3

2. General Principles..... 3

3. Neutral and Non-Partisan..... 3

4. Election Campaign Conduct ..... 4

5. Prohibition of Bribery and Undue Influence ..... 5

6. Social Media and Communications ..... 5

7. Holding Religion and the Institution of Monarchy Above Politics ..... 5

8. Ethnicity, Regionalism, and National Harmony ..... 6

9. Respectful and Ethical Campaigning..... 6

10. Election Finance Compliance ..... 6

11. Responsibility for Representatives and Supporters ..... 7

12. Poll Day Conduct..... 7

13. Post-Election Obligations ..... 7

13. Penalty for Violation ..... 8

**ELECTION CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CANDIDATES**  
**4th Local Government Elections: Dzongkhag Thromde Tshogde Elections, 2026**

**Phuentshogling and Thimphu**

**1. Purpose**

This Code of Conduct shall guide the behaviour and conduct of all candidates contesting the fourth Dzongkhag Thromde Tshogde Elections, 2026, to ensure that elections are conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and democratic manner in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Election Act, and all relevant electoral laws, rules, and regulations.

**2. General Principles**

Every candidate shall:

1. Uphold the Constitution, Electoral Laws, and comply with the directions, orders, and rulings issued by the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) in the exercise of its constitutional and statutory mandate,
2. Respect and protect the sovereignty, security, unity, and integrity of the Kingdom.
3. Conduct himself/herself with integrity, truthfulness, selflessness, loyalty, patriotism and respect for others.
4. Promote peaceful, free and fair elections.
5. Respect democratic values, good governance and the rule of law.
6. Respect the rights of other candidates and voters.
7. Refrain from engaging in any criminal, unlawful, or unethical activity.

**3. Neutral and Non-Partisan**

**3.1 A candidate contesting a Local Government election shall:**

- 3.1.1 Remain neutral and independent of partisan politics
- 3.1.2 Not be affiliated with, represent, or act on behalf of any political party.
- 3.1.3 Not claim, seek, or imply support or endorsement from any political party.
- 3.1.4 Not use any political party symbol, slogan, campaign material, or resources.

## **4. Election Campaign Conduct**

### **4.1 A candidate shall:**

- 4.1.1 Commence election campaigning only upon acceptance of the nomination by the Returning Officer and issuance of the Notice of Nomination.
- 4.1.2 Conduct campaign activities strictly within the authorized campaign period and in accordance with the campaign schedule approved by the Returning Officer.
- 4.1.3 Cease all forms of election campaigning forty-eight (48) hours prior to the commencement of poll, commencing from 8:00 a.m. on 13 July 2026 to 8:00 am on 15 July 2026.
- 4.1.4 Conduct smaller group meetings only between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- 4.1.5 Use and distribute only those campaign materials approved by the Returning Officer.
- 4.1.6 Respect the campaign activities, meetings, and lawful rights of other candidates.

### **4.2 A candidate shall not:**

- 4.2.1 Make any unrealistic or unreasonable pledge or promise, whether in a manifesto or campaign pledge
- 4.2.2 Engage in early campaigning or unofficial canvassing.
- 4.2.3 Conduct door-to-door campaigning.
- 4.2.4 Disseminate false, misleading, defamatory, or malicious information.
- 4.2.5 Obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with the campaign activities of another candidate.

## **5. Prohibition of Bribery and Undue Influence**

### **5.1 A candidate shall not:**

- 5.1.1 Offer, give, promise, or distribute money, gifts, food, entertainment, or any material benefit to influence voters.
- 5.1.2 Promise personal favours, employment, contracts, or benefits in exchange for votes.
- 5.1.3 Resort to intimidation, coercion, threats, undue influence, or any corrupt electoral practice.

## **6. Social Media and Communications**

### **6.1 A candidate shall not:**

- 6.1.1 Publish, transmit or share hate speech or false, defamatory or malicious content.
- 6.1.2 Disseminate information intended to unfairly damage the electoral prospects of another candidate or party.
- 6.1.3 Spread misinformation or content likely to incite violence, hatred or intimidation.

## **7. Holding Religion and the Institution of Monarchy Above Politics**

### **6.1 A candidate shall not:**

- 6.1.1 Use religion or religious sentiments for electoral advantage.
- 6.1.2 Solicit, directly or indirectly, votes at or through religious gatherings or institutions.
- 6.1.3 Invoke the name, image, status, or influence of the Druk Gyalpo, members of the Royal Family, religious personalities, or religious institutions for electoral gain.
- 6.1.4 Engage in any activity that undermines the dignity and sanctity of the institution of Monarchy or religion.

## **8. Ethnicity, Regionalism, and National Harmony**

### **7.1 A candidate shall not:**

- 7.1.1 Seek votes on the basis of ethnicity, region, language, religion, or community.
- 7.1.2 Promote ethnic, regional, communal, or social divisions.
- 7.1.3 Make statements or engage in conduct that may create disharmony, hostility, ill-will, or tension among citizens.
- 7.1.4 Incite voters on the basis of communal, ethnic, or regional identities.

## **9. Respectful and Ethical Campaigning**

### **8.1 A candidate shall:**

- 8.1.1 Conduct campaign activities with honesty, integrity, dignity, and respect.
- 8.1.2 Focus campaign messages on issues, policies, and local development priorities.
- 8.1.3 Promote constructive and informed public discourse.

### **8.2 A candidate shall not:**

- 8.2.1 Make personal attacks or defamatory statements against another candidate.
- 8.1.2 Use abusive, inflammatory, threatening, or provocative language.
- 8.1.3 Spread rumours, misinformation, or unsubstantiated allegations.

## **10. Election Finance Compliance**

### **9.1 Every candidate shall:**

- 9.1.1 Adhere to the campaign expenditure limits prescribed by the Election Commission of Bhutan.
- 9.1.2 Maintain accurate records of campaign expenditures and transactions.
- 9.1.3 Submit all required financial reports and election returns within the prescribed time.
- 9.1.4 Use campaign funds strictly in accordance with electoral laws and regulations.

## **11. Responsibility for Representatives and Supporters**

- 10.1 A candidate shall be responsible for ensuring that his or her representatives, campaign workers, and supporters comply with this Code and all applicable Electoral Laws.
- 10.2 A candidate may be held accountable where any representative or supporter, acting on behalf of the candidate:
  - 10.2.1 Engages in unlawful campaigning;
  - 10.2.2 Resorts to intimidation, bribery, coercion, or undue influence;
  - 10.2.3 Violates any provision of electoral laws, rules, regulations, directives, or this Code of Conduct.

## **12. Poll Day Conduct**

- 11.1 On the day of poll and during the forty-eight (48) hour no campaign period, a candidate and his or her representatives shall not:
  - 11.1.1 Campaign, canvass, solicit votes, or conduct public meetings.
  - 11.1.2 Display campaign materials, banners, posters, symbols, or propaganda.
  - 11.1.3 Induce or influence voters in any manner.
  - 11.1.4 Obstruct or interfere with voters exercising their franchise.
- 11.2 Candidates shall cooperate fully with election officials and security personnel in ensuring peaceful, orderly, and lawful conduct of the poll.

## **13. Post-Election Obligations**

- 12.1 Every candidate shall:
  - 12.1.1. Respect and accept the lawful outcome of the election.
  - 12.1.2 Remove all campaign materials within the period prescribed by the Election Commission.
  - 12.1.3 Ensure proper disposal of campaign-related waste and materials.
  - 12.1.4 Submit all required election returns and reports within the prescribed timelines.

### **13. Penalty for Violation**

- 13.1 Any violation of this Code of Conduct shall constitute an electoral offence and may result in warnings, fines, disqualification, cancellation of candidature, or any other action deemed appropriate by the Election Commission of Bhutan under the applicable electoral laws, rules, and regulations.