

# Guidance for Voting in Bahá'í Elections

Here is a study that can help develop a more mature and principled approach to deciding who to vote for in a Bahá'í election.

1. O ye dear friends of `Abdu'l-Bahá! A blessed letter hath been received from you, telling of the election of a Spiritual Assembly. It hath rejoiced my heart to know that, God be praised, the friends in that area, with absolute unity, fellowship and love, have held this new election and were successful in voting for souls who are sanctified, are favoured at the Holy Threshold and are well known amongst the friends to be staunch and firm in the Covenant. —`Abdu'l-Bahá

*Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), no. 37, p. 77.*

**Covenant:** binding agreement between God and mankind, and between both Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá and the believers  
**favoured:** regarded and treated with special attention  
**fellowship:** companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing  
**firm:** certain and unchangeable under pressure

**Holy Threshold:** figuratively, near the presence of Bahá'u'lláh  
**sanctified:** approved to a sacred duty  
**Spiritual Assembly:** Administrative Body of a local Bahá'í community  
**staunch:** steadfast in loyalty or principle  
**unity:** harmony, agreement, peace, and accord, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife

2. If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá'í Assemblies, as enumerated in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets, we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience. —Shoghi Effendi

*Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 88.*

**ability:** skill or competence to perform the task  
**combine:** bring into harmonious union for a common end or purpose  
**consider:** think about carefully  
**consideration:** attention or thought as grounds for choosing  
**delegates:** voting representatives  
**devotion:** acts of ardent dedication and affection [to the Cause, its ideals, and institutions]  
**enumerated:** recounted one after another  
**experience:** previous participation or learning in the activity  
**incumbent:** imposed as a responsibility  
**irrespective:** having no regard  
**least:** smallest possible  
**loyalty:** allegiance and faithfulness [to the Cause, its ideals, and institutions]  
**material:** physical or worldly

**mature:** fully developed [from]  
**mind:** mental and intellectual capabilities  
**necessary:** essential or needed  
**passion:** acting on ungovernable emotions as distinguished from reason  
**prejudice:** preconceived opinion or judgment of those different from oneself, not based on reason, truth, or actual experience  
**qualities:** distinctive virtues, powers, or traits of character  
**recognized:** formally accepted and acknowledged  
**selfless:** having no regard for oneself [in]  
**trace:** minute sign or evidence  
**unquestioned:** undoubted, unopposed, or undisputed  
**well-trained:** excellently and properly directed and educated in development [of]

3. ... I do not feel it to be in keeping with the spirit of the Cause to impose any limitation upon the freedom of the believers to choose those of any race, nationality or temperament who best combine the essential qualifications for membership of administrative institutions. They should disregard personalities and concentrate their attention on the qualities and requirements of office, without prejudice, passion or partiality. The Assembly should be representative of the choicest and most varied and capable elements in every Bahá'í community....

—Shoghi Effendi

*Cited in The Sanctity and Nature of Bahá'í Elections: A Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, (London: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no. 11, p. 4.*

**administrative institutions:** the governing bodies that manage and direct Bahá'í affairs  
**Assembly:** local or national Bahá'í administrative body  
**capable:** able; efficient  
**Cause:** Bahá'í Faith  
**choicest:** most worthy of being chosen  
**combine:** bring into harmonious union for a common end or purpose  
**disregard:** intentionally ignore  
**elements:** one of a number of distinct groups composing a larger group or community  
**essential:** most important and necessary  
**impose:** place or set by authority  
**limitations:** binding, restricting, or restraining conditions  
**partiality:** preference towards someone liked or fond of

**passion:** acting on ungovernable emotions as distinguished from reason  
**personalities:** qualities that make someone socially interesting, appealing, or popular  
**prejudice:** judgment or opinion of others formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge  
**qualifications:** conditions or standards that must be met  
**qualities:** distinctive virtues, powers, or traits of character  
**representative:** made up of those whose qualities are examples  
**requirements:** essentials; necessities  
**temperament:** one's emotional or mental characteristics or disposition  
**varied:** diverse; mixed

4. From among the pool of those whom the elector believes to be qualified to serve, selection should be made with due consideration given to such other factors as age distribution, diversity, and gender. The elector should make his choice after careful thought over an extended period before the actual election.

—the Universal House of Justice

*Messages from the Universal House of Justice 2001-2022, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing, 2024), par. 87.7, p. 168.*

**consideration:** attention or thought as grounds for choosing  
**distribution:** apportionment; spread out so as to be covered  
**diversity:** difference or variety in people (especially of race or culture)

**due:** rightful; appropriate  
**factors:** contributing elements or influences  
**gender:** of men and women  
**qualified:** having met the required conditions or standards  
**pool:** group of people

5. In regard to your question about qualifications of delegates and assembly members: the qualifications which he outlined are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Bahá'í office, whatever its nature. But those are only an indication, they do not mean people who don't fulfil them cannot be elected to office. We must aim as high as we can.

—written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

*The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 207.*

**aim:** strive towards a goal  
**applicable:** appropriate or suitable for being applied  
**delegates:** voting representatives  
**he:** Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

**indication:** knowledge pointed out or directed to  
**outlined:** see qualifications outlined in quotation number  
**qualifications:** conditions or standards that must be met

6. Due regard must be paid to their actual capacity and present attainments, and only those who are best qualified for membership, be they men or women, and irrespective of social standing, should be elected to the extremely responsible position of a member of the Bahá'í Assembly. —Shoghi Effendi  
*Dawn of a New Day*, (New Delhi, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), p. 4.

**attainments:** accomplishments or achievements  
**capacity:** abilities and potential capability  
**due regard must be paid to:** it is necessary to look upon and consider

**irrespective of:** having no regard  
**qualified:** having met the required conditions or standards  
**social standing:** rank or status among those with whom one associates or interacts

7. It is also expected that, through training and experience in the process and spirit of Bahá'í elections, the members of the electorate will have raised their consciousness of their responsibility to vote for only those who satisfy the requirements that the Guardian has outlined. They will, therefore, see it as their continuing duty to familiarize themselves with the character and abilities of those who are active in the community so that, when the time for an election comes, they will already have some idea of the people from among whom they must make their choice.

—the Universal House of Justice

Cited in *The Sanctity and Nature of Bahá'í Elections: A Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice*, (London: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no. 18, p. 6.

**abilities:** natural or acquired physical, moral, or intellectual powers, skills, or competencies  
**active:** engaged or involved by action or works  
**character:** distinguishing traits, qualities, or nature  
**consciousness:** personal awareness and understanding  
**duty:** moral obligation  
**electorate:** body of people entitled to vote  
**expected:** considered bound by duty  
**familiarize:** make well known to or accustom  
**Guardian:** One appointed by `Abdu'l-Bahá in ☞

His Will and Testament to carry on into the future the function of authoritative interpretation of the Sacred Writings and the care and protection of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi.  
**outlined:** indicated as the principal features  
**requirements:** needed essentials  
**responsibility:** act for which one is morally accountable  
**satisfy:** adequately fulfill  
**training:** the learning of skills and proficiencies through instruction and guidance

8. ...the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold.

—Shoghi Effendi

*Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 136.

**elector:** one entitled to vote  
**inspired:** divinely influenced and motivated  
**prayer:** "Prayer is conversation with God."  
 —`Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Diary of Mírzá Ahmad Sohráb, 15 March 1914, "Prayer", in ☞

cited *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, no. 4 (May 17, 1917), p. 41.  
**reflection:** attentive consideration or contemplation  
**uphold:** give support to

9. Also relevant to this question is the statement made by `Abdu'l-Bahá in one of His Tablets to the effect that a voter should make his choice from among those whose good name has been widely diffused. ... The purpose is that those who are elected to an Assembly should be the most worthy for this service; this does not and cannot mean that all those who are worthy will be elected.

—the Universal House of Justice

Cited in *The Sanctity and Nature of Bahá'í Elections: A Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice*, (London: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no. 18, p. 6.

**good name:** honor, respect, and reputation  
**relevant:** related and important

**widely diffused:** widespread; well-known  
**worthy:** of sufficient qualities and requirements

