

Amend
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JURIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2015

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JURIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2015

A BILL FOR AN ACT TO AMEND THE JURIES ACT TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATE MEANS OF JURY SELECTION BY ELECTRONIC PROCESS

Enacted by the Parliament of The Bahamas

1. Short title and commencement.

- (1) This Act, which amends the Juries Act (Ch. 59), may be cited as the Juries (Amendment) Act, 2015.
- (2) This Act shall come into force on such date as the Minister may appoint by Notice published in the *Gazette*.

2. Amendment of section 7 of the principal Act.

Section 7 of the principal Act is amended by the repeal of subsection (4) and the substitution therefor of the following as a new subsection (4) —

- “(4) For the purpose of determining the persons liable for jury service, the Parliamentary Commissioner shall, on such date in each year as the Chief Justice shall direct, prepare and forward to the Registrar, printed copies of a list containing contact information including, but not limited to, the names in alphabetical order, telephone number, email address, facsimile number and national insurance number of persons whose names appear on the official list of electors for elections to the House of Assembly.”.

3. Amendment of section 10 of the principal Act.

Subsection (3) of section 10 is amended by deleting the words “third month immediately following thereafter, namely, 1st March, 1st June and 1st September” and substituting therefor the words “the second month immediately following thereafter”.

4. Amendment of section 14 of principal Act.

Section 14 of the principal Act is amended by the insertion immediately after subsection (7) of the following as a new subsection (8) —

“(8) Nothing in this section shall preclude the Parliamentary Commissioner from utilising an electronic process by way of the use of a computer to achieve the selection of a jury panel, and where an electronic process is used references to a card, a box or receptacle shall be construed as an entry or extraction of a name on a list of names compiled by a computer.”.

OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Juries (Amendment) Bill, 2015 seeks to amend sections 7, 10 and 14 of Chapter 59. This Bill seeks to empower the Parliamentary Commissioner to gather, in addition to the names of voters, additional contact and identification information. The Bill also seeks to give effect to the new innovative process of electronically selecting a jury panel by the use of a computerized system which enhances efficiency, the integrity of the jury selection process and ensures an additional random selection of a juror.

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the Short title and commencement.

Clause 2 of the Bill seeks to amend section 7 of the principal Act to expand the contact information of the registered voters which the Parliamentary Commissioner forwards to the Registrar of the Supreme Court pursuant to the direction of the Chief Justice.

Clause 3 of the Bill seeks to amend section 10 so that the Registrar selects the jurors every two months.

Clause 4 of the Bill seeks to amend section 14 of the principal Act to enable the Commissioner to utilize an electronic computerized process to empanel a jury which ensures the procedure is not confined to selection drawn by a ball, card, box or receptacle. The use of the ball, card, box or receptacle was the historically enshrined method of selection. Previously, the bailiff included numbered balls in a box from which a ball was randomly selected. The number on that ball was announced in open court and the juror assigned the corresponding number was thereby selected for consideration to serve. This amended process brings a more modern approach to jury selection.