

Rt. Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham

Remarks on Early Poll

30th April, 2012

My Fellow Bahamians,

On the eve of our historic advance poll, it is important for people from around the world to see first hand that democracy in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas continues to thrive! We can be justly proud of our accomplishments and that of our forefathers to ensure and protect our nation and the right of Bahamians.

Indeed with more than 250 years of democratic governance behind us, we continue to climb to higher heights in 2012.

Noteworthy among them are the strides made to empower women and to promote equality amongst all citizens of The Bahamas by gender, race, colour, religion or political affiliation.

We stand tall among all the nations of the world as the nation consistently boasting the highest participation / voter turnout in general elections only next to Australia where voting in general elections is mandatory by Australian law.

I elected to address you this evening to express my appreciation for the strong democratic ties that bind us and to give credit to you, the Bahamian people, for the progress we continue to make through fair, open and transparent elections.

Of course this depends on each of us respecting the electoral process tomorrow in the advance poll and next Monday as we cast our ballots in the General Elections.

A word about the Advanced Poll: Previously only uniformed officers and those working in the polls were allowed to participate in the Advanced Poll. This year, private citizens who are unable to vote on Election Day, Monday, May 7th were permitted to register to vote on the Advanced Poll.

They applied in large numbers and I am pleased to report that 7,865 voters may mark their X for the candidate of their choice tomorrow in the advance poll. Of this number, more than 4,000 would not have been eligible to vote in an Advance Poll previously.

Those taking the opportunity to vote in the Advance Poll tomorrow include for the first time, persons scheduled for medical care next week and others who work for The Bahamas government abroad or students studying abroad.

This is a great advance in our democracy; a true demonstration of the maturing process of our democracy which I am proud to say came on my watch.

Advance Polls will take place in New Providence at the College of The Bahamas /Bahamas Tourism Centre and at the Kendal G L Isaacs Gymnasium. Advance Polls will also take place in Grand Bahama, Abaco, Andros, Berry Island, Eleuthera, Exuma and Ragged Island. Voters in Cat Island, Long Island and MICAL may vote in New Providence. The locations of the Advance Poll together with the list of names of registered voters eligible to vote tomorrow were published in this morning's edition of the Nassau Guardian and The Tribune.

Overseas registered Bahamian voters may vote in Washington, D.C.; Miami, Florida, New York City, Atlanta, Georgia; Ottawa Canada; London England; Kingston, Jamaica, Bridgetown, Barbados, and Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

I advise that voters registered to vote overseas on the early ballot must vote tomorrow. Should they fail to do so, they will not be eligible to vote on 7th May.

My Fellow Bahamians

Elections are a time of high energy, strong feelings, heavy discussions and sometimes seemingly overwhelming pressure; do not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by the process, rather hold true to your Christian values. Encourage and support each other and appreciate and respect the rights of others. This is the time to exhibit our positive talents, express our views in constructive ways, consider the options and elect the candidates and Party that you feel will best serve our Bahamaland.

Do not allow anyone to intimidate you.

Casting your ballot is a process that requires your full attention. Just remember to place your X only. No name, no identifying marks, no thumb prints, no other marks that can cause you to lose your vote and your voice in this election.

For the first time ever, our General Elections are being observed by observer missions from the United States of America and from the Organization of American States. The US Mission comprises 36 observers. The OAS Observer Mission comprises 16 representatives from a number of member states including Guatemala, Colombia, Antigua and Barbuda, the USA, Canada, Argentina, Grenada, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Switzerland, Peru, and Barbados.

We wish to conduct orderly, peaceful elections and I ask that all citizens conduct themselves accordingly.

Ensure that we continue to conduct ourselves in the best traditions of our ancestors and show the world how safe, open and transparent elections are done Bahamian style.

Above all we must stand proud and strong as we move forward, upward and onward together!

God Bless The Bahamas.