THE POLITICAL FINANCING BILL

(No. XIV of 2019)

Explanatory Memorandum

The object of this Bill is to provide for accountability and transparency with regard to the financing of political parties, independent members of the National Assembly and independent candidates nominated to stand as such at a general election, with a view to preventing undue influence and corruption.

- 2. The Bill further provides for widening the functions and powers of the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Electoral Commissioner for the better regulation of political financing.
- **3.** Opportunity is being taken to amend the Representation of the People Act so as to provide for matters related thereto.

P. K. JUGNAUTH

Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development

28 June 2019

THE POLITICAL FINANCING BILL

(No. XIV of 2019)

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A BILL

To provide for accountability and transparency with regard to political financing

PART I - PRELIMINARY

ENACTED by the Parliament of Mauritius, as follows -

1. Short title

This Act may be cited as the Political Financing Act 2019.

2. Interpretation

In this Act -

"campaign period", in relation to a general election, means the period between the date on which the writs of election are issued and the date on which the election results are proclaimed;

"Commission" means the Electoral Supervisory Commission referred to in section 38(2) of the Constitution;

"donation" -

- (a) includes a donation in kind; but
- (b) in relation to a registered political party, does not include a membership fee of the party or any fee imposed by the party on its members;

"donation in kind" -

- (a) means any of the following sponsorship provided to a registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate
 - (i) publicity in the media and on billboards;
 - (ii) elections paraphernalia, such as banners, flags, buntings or posters;
 - (iii) campaign promotion shirts, t-shirts, polo shirts and caps;
 - (iv) advertising materials, such as sample ballot papers, pamphlets or stationery; but
- (b) does not include -
 - (i) services rendered personally by a volunteer; or
 - (ii) free air-time for political broadcast;

"Electoral Commissioner" means the Electoral Commissioner appointed under section 40(1) of the Constitution;

"financial year" means the period of 12 months ending on 30 June in every year;

"independent candidate" means a person, who does not belong to any political party, nominated to stand as candidate at a general election;

"independent member" means a member of the National Assembly who does not belong to any political party;

"qualified auditor" has the same meaning as in the Companies Act;

"registered political party" means a political party registered as such under section 6(3);

"Register of donations" means the register referred to in section 12;

"religious body" -

- (a) means a body constituted or established for a religious purpose; and
- (b) includes -

- (i) a religious federation, specified in item (u)(i) of the Eighth Schedule to the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act, which is eligible to a per capita subsidy from Government;
- (ii) a religious body which is registered under the Registration of Associations Act and affiliated to a religious federation specified in item (u)(i) of the Eighth Schedule to the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act;
- (iii) a religious body, specified in item (u)(ii) of the Eighth Schedule to the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act, which is eligible to an annual fixed grant from Government;

"statement of accounts" means a statement of accounts in the form set out in the Schedule;

"State-owned enterprise" has the same meaning as in the Declaration of Assets Act 2018.

PART II – ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION AND ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

3. Supervisory role of Commission

The Commission shall have such functions and powers as may be necessary for the purposes of this Act and those functions and powers conferred on the Commission shall, under its supervision, be discharged and exercised by the Electoral Commissioner.

4. Power to inspect, verify, review, investigate and issue directives and warnings

The Commission shall, in addition to such powers as may be conferred on it under this Act, have the powers to –

- inspect, verify, review and investigate into the financial affairs, including the Register of donations, of registered political parties, independent members and independent candidates; and
- (b) issue, in accordance with section 21, directives or warnings in case of non-compliance with this Act.

PART III - REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

5. Political party to be registered

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), every political party in Mauritius, being a lawful association, shall, for the purposes of this Act, be registered with the Commission.
- (2) Where a writ of election has been issued, no application for registration as a political party shall be entertained by the Commission during the period starting 10 days before nomination day and ending on the day on which the election results are proclaimed.
- (3) Where a registered political party ceases to exist, the secretary of that party shall inform the Commission accordingly and such notification shall be supported by a certified extract of the minutes of proceedings of the meeting at which such decision was taken.

6. Application for registration as political party

- (1) An application to be registered as a political party shall be made in such form as may be prescribed and shall contain the following particulars
 - (a) the name and symbol of identification of the political party;
 - (b) the official address of the political party;
 - (c) the names, signature and residential address of the leader, president, secretary, treasurer and other office-bearers of the political party;
 - (d) whether the political party is represented by any member in the National Assembly;
 - (e) evidence that the political party holds a bank account; and
 - (f) such other information or document as the Commission may determine.
 - (2) An application made under subsection (1) shall
 - be accompanied by a copy of the memorandum of rules and regulations of the political party, by whatever name called, if any; and

- (b) be signed, in the presence of the Electoral Commissioner or any person authorised by him, by the president, secretary and treasurer of the political party.
- (3) The Commission may, after considering all the particulars of the application and any other necessary and relevant factors, register the political party and shall, as soon as practicable, give notice of such registration by publication in the Gazette and in such other manner as the Commission may determine.

7. Changes to particulars of registered political party

The treasurer of a registered political party shall, at the time of submitting the statement of accounts for any financial year, notify the Commission of the changes, if any, to the particulars of the party.

PART IV - POLITICAL FINANCING

8. Donations

- (1) A donation made for the purposes of this Act shall
 - (a) subject to subsection (2), be made only to a registered political party;
 - (b) be made only to an independent member; or
 - (c) be made only to an independent candidate.
- (2) No person shall make a donation to an individual member of a registered political party, other than to the treasurer of the party.
- (3) Any person who makes or accepts a donation in contravention of subsection (1) or (2) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

9. Prohibited donations

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), a registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate shall not accept any donation, whether directly or indirectly, from
 - (a) an anonymous person;
 - (b) a State-owned enterprise;
 - (c) a statutory corporation;

- (d) a religious body;
- (e) a non-governmental organisation which is in receipt of any subsidy or grant from the Government;
- (f) any CSR Fund set up under section 50L of the Income Tax Act;
- (g) a non-citizen;
- (h) a foreign Government or foreign entity; or
- (i) such other bodies as may be prescribed.
- (2) Subsection (1) shall not apply to any donation received from a non-resident citizen.
- (3) Any person who accepts a donation in contravention of subsection (1) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

10. Suspicious donations

- (1) A registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate shall not accept a donation that it or he knows, or ought reasonably to have known, is a donation which originates from the proceeds of a crime and the party, member or candidate, as the case may be, shall, in such a case, report the matter to the relevant investigatory body.
- (2) Any person who accepts a donation in contravention of subsection (1) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.
- (3) Where the Commission has reasonable grounds to suspect that a donation made to a registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate originates from the proceeds of a crime, the Commission shall refer the matter to any relevant investigatory body for investigation.

11. Donations by company

- (1) Notwithstanding any other enactment, no company shall make any donation to a registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate unless there is a board resolution authorising it to do so.
- (2) Every company which makes a donation pursuant to subsection (1) shall disclose, in its financial statement, the amount of donations made to

a registered political party, an independent member or an independent candidate.

- (3) Any monetary donation by a company shall be made by cheque or electronic means.
 - (4) For the purpose of this section -
 - (a) "company" -
 - (i) means a company incorporated or registered under the Companies Act; and
 - (ii) includes any société or other corporate entity;
 - (b) any reference to the board shall be construed as a reference to the governing body of the *société* or corporate entity.
- (5) A company which fails to comply with subsection (1), (2) or (3) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

12. Register of donations

- (1) Every registered political party, independent member or independent candidate shall, for the purposes of this Act, keep a register to be known as the Register of donations.
 - (2) The Register of donations shall contain -
 - (a) the monetary donations received, whether in cash, by cheque or by electronic means;
 - (b) the amount, the nature and the monetary value of the donation in kind received;
 - (c) the date the donations were received;
 - (d) the names and addresses of donors; and
 - (e) such other particulars as may be prescribed.
- (3) (a) Any person who fails to comply with subsection (1) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

(b) It shall be a defence to any person that he took all reasonable steps to comply with subsection (1).

PART V - REPORTING ON DONATION IN KIND

13. Limit of donations in kind

- (1) Every registered political party or independent candidate shall not, during a campaign period, accept donation in kind of a value exceeding the threshold of 50 per cent of the total allowable expenditure of that party or candidate under the Representation of the People Act.
- (2) A registered political party or independent candidate who fails to comply with subsection (1) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

14. Report of donations during campaign period

- (1) The treasurer of every registered political party or an independent candidate shall, at the time of submitting the returns of election expenditure under the Representation of the People Act, submit to the Commission a report indicating the amount, nature and monetary value of any donation in kind received during the campaign period, in such form and manner as the Commission may approve.
- (2) In the case of a party alliance, the report referred to in subsection (1) shall be submitted jointly by the respective treasurer of each party constituting the party alliance.

15. Interpretation of Part V

In this Part -

"political party" includes a party alliance of 2 or more parties.

PART VI – ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND STATEMENTS OF ACCOUNTS

16. Accounting records

- (1) The treasurer of every registered political party shall ensure that the accounting records of the party are kept in accordance with subsections (2) and (3) so as to show and explain the party's transactions.
 - (2) The accounting records shall -
 - (a) disclose, at any time, with reasonable accuracy, the financial position of the party; and

- (b) enable the treasurer to ensure that any statement of accounts prepared by him complies with this Act.
- (3) The accounting records shall, in particular, contain
 - (a) entries showing all donations received and any payment made by the party and the matters in respect of which the receipts and payments take place; and
 - (b) a record of the assets and liabilities of the party, if any.
- (4) The treasurer of a registered political party shall ensure that any accounting records of the party made for the purpose of this section are preserved for at least 5 years from the end of the financial year in which they are made.
- (5) (a) The treasurer of a registered political party who fails to comply with subsection (1) or (4) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.
- (b) It shall be a defence to the treasurer of a registered political party that he took all reasonable steps to comply with subsection (1) or (4), as the case may be.

17. Statement of accounts

- (1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), the treasurer of every registered political party shall prepare a statement of accounts in respect of each financial year, which shall be duly audited.
- (2) Where a registered political party's gross income or total expenditure in any financial year exceeds one million rupees, the accounts of the party for that year shall be audited by a qualified auditor.
- (3) The statement of accounts shall be signed by the leader and treasurer of the registered political party.
- (4) (a) The treasurer of a registered political party shall, not later than 60 days after the end of every financial year, submit the party's audited statement of accounts and the auditor's report to the Commission.
- (b) The treasurer of a registered political party who fails to comply with paragraph (a) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.
- (c) It shall be a defence to the treasurer of a registered political party that he took all reasonable steps to comply with paragraph (a).

- (5) (a) Where it appears to the Commission that any statement of accounts has not been audited, the Commission may appoint a qualified auditor to audit those accounts.
- (b) The expenses of an audit carried out by an auditor appointed by the Commission under paragraph (a), including the auditor's remuneration, may be recovered by the Commission from the funds of the party concerned as a debt due to the Commission.
- (6) (a) Every auditor appointed to carry out an audit under subsection (5)(a)
 - shall have a right of access, at all reasonable times, to the registered political party's books, documents and other records; and
 - (ii) may require from the treasurer, or any other officer of the registered political party, such information and explanations as he may determine for the performance of his duty as auditor.
- (b) Where a person fails to provide an auditor with an access, information or explanation to which the auditor is entitled to pursuant to paragraph (a), the Commission may direct that person to comply with the auditor's request.
- (c) Any person who fails to comply with any directives of the Commission under paragraph (b) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.
- (7) (a) The treasurer of a registered political party shall ensure that the party's statement of accounts prepared under this section is preserved for at least 5 years from the end of the financial year to which the statement relates.
- (b) The treasurer of a registered political party who fails to comply with paragraph (a) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.
- (c) It shall be a defence to the treasurer of a registered political party that he took all reasonable steps to comply with paragraph (a).
- (8) The Commission shall make any statement of accounts submitted under this Act available for consultation by the public.

18. Restatement of non-compliant statement of accounts

- (1) Where it appears to the Commission that any statement of accounts filed by any registered political party for any financial year is not compliant with this Act, the Commission may require that party to restate the statement of accounts.
 - (2) A restatement under subsection (1) shall be confined to
 - (a) the correction of those aspects in which the statement did not comply with this Act; and
 - (b) the making of any necessary consequential alterations.

19. Report of Commission regarding statement of accounts

- (1) The Commission shall prepare a report regarding the statement of accounts of every registered political party.
- (2) A report referred to in subsection (1) shall be laid before the National Assembly not later than 120 days after the end of every financial year.

20. Application of Part VI

- (1) This Part shall, in addition, apply with such adaptations and modifications as may be necessary to an independent member.
- (2) An independent member shall, in accordance with this Part, have the same responsibilities as are conferred upon the treasurer of a registered political party.

PART VII - POWER TO ISSUE DIRECTIVES AND WARNINGS

21. Directives and warnings

- (1) Where the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has contravened or is likely to contravene this Act, it may issue to that person such written directive or warning as it may, in the circumstances, determine.
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the Commission may direct a person, in the case of a contravention of this Act, to do a specified act, or refrain from doing a specified act, for the purpose of
 - (a) remedying the effects of the contravention; or
 - (b) taking such measures as may be necessary to ensure that the contravention does not occur.

- (3) A directive issued under this section may specify the time by which, or the period during which, it shall be complied with.
- (4) The Commission may revoke a directive issued under this section at any time, by written notice to the person.
- (5) (a) No person shall knowingly hinder or prevent a person from complying with a directive issued to him under this section.
- (b) Any person who contravenes paragraph (a) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

22. Compliance with directives

- (1) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), a person to whom a directive is issued under this Act shall comply with the directive.
- (b) Where a directive is issued to a political party, the treasurer of the party or, where there is no treasurer, every person who is concerned in the management of the party shall comply with the directive.
- (2) Where a person fails to comply with a directive under this Act and a time period is specified for compliance, the person shall commit a separate offence for each day for which the directive is not complied with after the time period for compliance has elapsed, and shall, on conviction, in respect of each offence, be liable to a fine of 5,000 rupees per day, provided that the total fine shall not exceed one million rupees.
- (3) It shall be a defence to any person referred to in subsection (2) that he took all reasonable steps to comply with the directive.

PART VIII - MISCELLANEOUS

23. Hindering or preventing Commission from exercising its powers

Any person who hinders or prevents the Commission from exercising its powers under this Act shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one million rupees.

24. Offence committed by political party

Where an offence is committed by a political party, the person who, at the time of the commission of the offence, was the treasurer of the party or, where there is no treasurer, every person who, at the time of the commission of the offence, was concerned in the management of the party, shall also commit the

like offence, unless he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or consent, or that he took all reasonable steps to prevent the commission of the offence.

25. Regulations

- (1) The President may make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Any regulations made under subsection (1) shall be made after consultation with the Commission and the Electoral Commissioner.

26. Consequential amendment

The Representation of the People Act is amended -

- (a) in section 51(1) -
 - (i) by repealing paragraph (b) and replacing it by the following paragraph
 - (b) The maximum amount of election expenses to be incurred
 - (i) at a National Assembly election
 - (A) shall, in respect of a party, be one million rupees per constituency;
 - (B) shall, in respect of a candidate who is not the only candidate belonging to a party at the election in the constituency, be one million rupees per constituency;
 - (C) shall, in respect of candidate who does not belong to a party, or in case there is no other candidate belonging to the same party the election in constituency, be 1,500,000 rupees;

- (ii) at a Municipal City Council or Municipal Town Council election shall, in respect of a candidate, be 300,000 rupees;
- (iii) at a Village Council election shall, in respect of a candidate, be 200,000 rupees;
- (iv) at a local region election or an Island region election in Rodrigues shall, in respect of a candidate, be 200,000 rupees.
- (ii) by adding the following new paragraph
 - (c) In this subsection –

"party" includes a party alliance of 2 or more parties.

- (b) in section 53(1) -
 - (i) in paragraph (a), by deleting the words "25,000 rupees" and replacing them by the words "150,000 rupees";
 - (ii) in paragraph (b), by deleting the words "2,500 rupees" and replacing them by the words "25,000 rupees";
- (c) in section 56
 - (i) in subsection (2), by deleting the words "30 rupees" and replacing them by the words "5,000 rupees";
 - (ii) in subsection (8), by deleting the words "1,000 rupees" and replacing them by the words "50,000 rupees";
- (d) by inserting, after section 56, the following new section –

56A. Return by party

(1) Within 60 days after the proclamation of the results of an election, the treasurer of every party which has fielded at least one candidate at such election shall make an election return to the Electoral Commissioner in such form as the Electoral Commissioner may determine.

- (2) A return made under this section shall contain a full statement under the appropriate head specified in the return of all expenditure incurred in connection with the election by the party and shall be supported by vouchers for all payments in excess of 5,000 rupees.
- (3) (a) Every return under subsection (1) shall be supported by a declaration, in Form L, by the treasurer of the party stating that, to the best of his knowledge, information and belief, the return is a full and accurate return of all expenditure incurred by the party at such election.
- (b) In the case of a party alliance, the declaration referred to in paragraph (a) shall be made jointly by the respective treasurer of each party constituting the party alliance.
- (4) The Electoral Commissioner shall, within 10 days after he receives a return under this section, publish in a daily newspaper and on the website of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner a notice of the time and place at which the return and the documents in support thereof can be inspected.
- (5) The treasurer of any party who fails to comply with this section shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 500,000 rupees.
 - (6) In this section -

"party" includes a party alliance of 2 or more parties.

- (e) in section 63(2), by deleting the words "1,000 rupees" and replacing them by the words "50,000 rupees";
- (f) in section 66, by deleting the words "2,000 rupees" and replacing them by the words "50,000 rupees";
- (g) in section 71(1), by deleting the words "2,000 rupees" and "500 rupees" and replacing them by the words "50,000 rupees" and "20,000 rupees", respectively;
- (h) by inserting, after section 72A, the following new sections –

72B. Restriction on temporary political headquarters and campaign quarters commonly known as "baz"

(1) No party, group or candidate who does not belong to a party or group shall for the purpose of a National Assembly election, a

Municipal City Council election, a Municipal Town Council election, a Village Council election or a local region election in Rodrigues, as the case may be, set up –

- (a) more than one political headquarters per constituency, ward, village or local region, as the case may be; and
- (b) more than one temporary political campaign quarter, commonly known as "baz", per registration area.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), no political headquarters or temporary political campaign quarter shall be set up before the date on which a writ of election is issued.
- (3) Any person who contravenes this section shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 50,000 rupees.
- (4) The President may, for the purposes of this section, make such regulations as he thinks fit.
 - (5) In this section –

"group" has the same meaning as in the Local Government Act.

72C. Directives and warnings

- (1) Where the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has contravened or is likely to contravene section 72B(1) or (2), it may issue to that person such written directive or warning as it may, in the circumstances, determine.
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the Commission may direct a person, in the case of a contravention of section 72B(1) or (2), to do a specified act, or refrain from doing a specified act, for the purpose of
 - (a) remedying the effects of the contravention; or
 - (b) taking such measures as may be necessary to ensure that the contravention does not occur.
- (3) A directive issued under this section may specify the time by which, or period during which, it shall be complied with.

- (4) The Commission may revoke a directive issued under this section at any time, by written notice to the person.
- (5) (a) No person shall knowingly hinder or prevent a person from complying with a directive issued to him under this section.
- (b) Any person who contravenes paragraph (a) shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 500,000 rupees.

72D. Compliance with directives

- (1) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), a person to whom a directive is issued under section 72C shall comply with the directive.
- (b) Where a directive is issued to a political party, the secretary of the party or, where there is no secretary, every person who is concerned in the management of the party shall comply with the directive.
- (2) Where a person fails to comply with a directive under section 72C and a time period is specified for compliance, the person shall commit a separate offence for each day for which the directive is not complied with after the time period for compliance has elapsed, and shall, on conviction, in respect of each offence, be liable to a fine of 5,000 rupees per day, provided that the total fine shall not exceed 500,000 rupees.
- (3) It shall be a defence to any person referred to in subsection (2) that he took all reasonable steps to comply with the directive.
- (i) in section 74(1), by deleting the words "1,000 rupees" and replacing them by the words "50,000 rupees";
- (j) in the Schedule, by adding the following new Form L -

FORM L

[Section 56A(3)]

DECLARATION BY TREASURER OF PARTY/PARTY ALLIANCE*

I/we*,	,
(names and surn	
treasurer/treasurers* of the	, which (party/party alliance*)
Assembly held on to decinify the second seco	the election of members of the National the
Signature(s) *	Dated this day of
*Delete as appropriate	
Commencement	

27.

- Subject to subsection (2), this Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by Proclamation.
- Different dates may be fixed for the coming into operation of (2) different sections of this Act.

SCHEDULE

[Section 2]

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE

Name of political party		
Official address		
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS YEAR ENDING		AL
Balance as at 1 July	(Rs cs)	(Rs cs)
(1) Cash		
(2) Bank(s)		
Name of bank(s) and type of bank account		
Receipts		
Subscription fees from members		
Interest		
Donations		
Others (please specify)		
Total		
Payments		
Total		
Balance at 30 June		
(1) Cash		
(2) Bank(s)		
Name of bank(s) and type of bank account		

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 30 JUNE		
Assets		
Cash and bank balances		
Liabilities		
Accumulated fund		
Name of Leader Signature of Leader	Name of Treasurer Signature of Treasurer	
Date		
CERTIFICATE OF	AUDITOR/S	
I/We, the undersigned, having had acces having examined the foregoing return and vouchers relating thereto, sign same as for	verified same with the accounts and	
Name(s) of Auditor(s)	Signature(s) of Auditor(s)	
Date		

STATEMENT OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF OFFICERS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE

(This statement is for the $\underline{\text{financial}}$ $\underline{\text{year in respect of which this return}}$ is being made.)

POST	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NO.		
Leader					
President					
Vice-President					
Secretary					
Assistant Secretary					
Treasurer					
Assistant Treasurer					
Committee members					
Auditors					
Name of Se	cretary	Signature o	of Secretary		
Date					

RETURN OF MEMBERSHIP AS AT 30 JUNE		
Total Number of Members on Re Total Number of Paid-up Member		
Name of Secretary	Signature of Secretary	
	Date	
CONSOI	LIDATED COPY OF RULES	
on(Please note that if the last ame	endment was made in the financial year in which	
this return is being made, a submitted along with this return	CONSOLIDATED COPY of the rules shall be n.)	
Name of Secretary	Signature of Secretary	
	Date	