

## CHAPTER 18

### NAMEDROPPING

#### **False Claim of Support**

[Please also see paras. 17.9 to 17.11 of Chapter 17]

18.1 A candidate must obtain **prior written consent** from a person or an organisation before using the name or logo of that person or organisation, or a pictorial representation of that person in any of his election advertisements or activities as an indication of support from that person or organisation. Oral consent is **not** sufficient [s 27 of the ECICO]. The EAC provides a standardised consent form for this purpose. Any indication of support in election advertisements, be it a text, a photograph or any other material, must be covered by a written consent from the person or organisation concerned. The written consent is a requirement under the ECICO. It protects the candidates from unnecessary complaints and disputes which may arise if only oral consent is obtained. It also protects the electors from being misinformed as to whether a candidate has the support of a person or an organisation. Prior written consent is required if the inclusion of the name, logo or pictorial representation of a person or an organisation, as the case may be, implies support of the candidate concerned. What amounts to “support” will depend on the circumstances of each case. The question to consider is whether any reasonable man who has seen the pictorial representation would have the perception that the persons appearing in the election advertisement support the candidate.

18.2 It is important to note that it is still an offence even if such an election advertisement contains a statement to the effect that it does not imply support from the person or organisation concerned [s 27(4) of the ECICO]. It is also an offence for a person to give information which he knows or ought to

know is materially false or misleading information to a candidate for promoting or prejudicing the election of a candidate or candidates [s 27(6) of the ECICO].

18.3 To avoid confusion, it is advisable for the written consent to set out clearly whether consent is given:

- (a) by a person in his personal capacity - in which case no mention should be made of any office title which he may have, in the candidate's election advertisements and campaign activities;
- (b) by a person in his official capacity - in which case his office title may be used by the candidate concerned for the said purposes; and
- (c) by an organisation (which may be signed by an authorised person such as its director, chairman or chief executive, etc.) - in which case the name of the organisation may be used by the candidate concerned for the said purposes.

18.4 Care must also be exercised in the use of the office title of an individual and this should be cleared with the person concerned when seeking his written consent. In the case where an office bearer of an organisation wishes to use his office title to support a candidate, he should be careful not to give the impression that it represents the support of the whole organisation except where a decision has been so taken by the governing body of the organisation or by a resolution of the members of that organisation passed at a general meeting. This will prevent dispute and dissatisfaction amongst the members. Depending on circumstances, the approval of an organisation or a committee may or may not be needed if an office bearer uses his office title to support a candidate. If a supporter includes in an election advertisement which bears the title of "the principal of a school" (for example, "Chan Tai

Man, the Principal”) or “chairman of an owners’ corporation” (for example, “Chan Tai Man, Chairman of Owners’ Corporation”), it would not be necessary for the candidate to seek the consent of the school or the owners’ corporation concerned since there is no specific mentioning of which school or owners’ corporation. However, it would be desirable for the candidate to seek the organisation’s prior written approval as well if the election advertisement is posted in the school or the building in which he is serving. *[Amended in January 2007]*

18.5 When a candidate has obtained consent of support from a person who holds a certain position in an organisation, he must make sure that in his election advertisements he does not misrepresent that he has the support of the organisation. He must ensure that his election advertisements do not give any misleading information that he has the support of the organisation as opposed to the person who holds the position in the organisation. When he has the support of an organisation, he must ensure that his election advertisements do not represent or give a misleading impression that he has the support of all the members of that organisation, unless the decision of that organisation in giving him support was made at a meeting of all its members present and voting.

18.6 Consent of support in writing by an organisation must be approved by the governing body of the organisation or by a resolution of the members of the organisation passed at a general meeting [s 27(5) of the ECICO].

18.7 Consent of support can be given to 2 or more candidates contesting in the election although that may cause confusion. Consent given can be revoked. In case of a revocation, in order to avoid dispute, it is advisable for the person or organisation who has revoked the consent to send a notice or copy of the revocation to the candidate concerned and to the RO.

18.8 Once consent has been revoked, the candidate concerned should

be careful to cease immediately using any election advertisement which contains the support of the person or organisation who has made the revocation. The costs incurred for the production of election advertisements bearing such support which have been used before revocation should still be regarded as the candidate's election expenses and be declared in the return and declaration of election expenses and donations.

18.9 It is not uncommon for candidates to put photographs in their election advertisements to show their past activities. However, it may be possible for electors to believe that those persons appearing in the photograph support a particular candidate when they receive such election advertisements. To minimise misunderstanding, for instance, if an election advertisement carries a photograph of the candidate attending an activity with other attendees, a caption specifying the particular nature of the event could be added underneath the photograph in such a way that will not imply, or likely to cause electors to believe, that the candidate has the support of the other people appearing in the photograph. If the photograph is likely to cause electors to believe that the candidate has the support of the other people appearing in the photograph, it is advisable that prior written consent of support should be obtained by the candidate.

18.10 To avoid misleading the electors to believe that a candidate has obtained support from a certain person, organisation, government agency or department, which is not the case, a candidate should not attach any materials published by any such person, organisation, government agency or department together with his own election advertisements.

### **Form of Consent**

18.11 The standard form “**Consent of Support**” is at **Appendix O**.

18.12 There are occasions (as allegations and complaints were received) requiring confirmation of the compliance of the law by a candidate. Therefore, every candidate is **required to deposit a copy** each of the **completed consent forms** with the RO **before** the display, distribution or otherwise use of the relevant election advertisement [s 81(1)(d)(ii) of the EP (CEE) Reg]. The RO will then be in a position to answer such enquiries, thus saving the trouble and sometimes the embarrassment of the candidates. Candidates are also **required to notify** the RO in writing of any **revocation** of consent. Such consent forms and notices of revocation (with the identity document numbers of the persons involved obliterated) will be made available for public inspection at the office of the RO.

### **Penalty**

18.13 It is an illegal conduct under the ECICO for a person to make false claim of support (ie a claim without **prior** written consent from the person or organisation concerned). For details of penalty and sanction, please refer to para. 17.3(b) and Part VII of Chapter 17.