

## **On the Formation Rules for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Selection Committee**

On August 10, the Preparatory Committee for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) passed at its fourth plenum the Formation Rules for the SAR Government's First Selection Committee. It also stated that it plans to establish the Selection Committee in November.

According to the rules, the Selection Committee will comprise 400 Hong Kong permanent residents, including 100 from the industrial, commercial, and financial sectors; 100 professionals; 100 from labor, grass-roots, and religious circles; and 40 former political figures, 26 Hong Kong deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC), and 34 Hong Kong members on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee. Selection Committee members are required to be over eighteen years of age, support "one country, two systems" and the Basic Law, and be willing to recommend the chief executive and elect the provisional legislature.

People from industrial, commercial, financial, professional, labor, grass-roots, and religious circles are required to register for nomination through their own organizations. Former political figures may register for nomination through their own organizations or on the recommendation of five Preparatory Committee members. The names will then be examined by Preparatory Committee members, who can make further recommendations. The Preparatory Committee presidium will finalize a list of candidates with at least 20 percent more candidates than seats, followed by a secret-ballot vote by all Preparatory Committee members to decide who will sit on the Selection Committee. Hong Kong CPPCC National Committee members may register themselves as candidates directly with the Preparatory Committee and decide electoral rules among themselves. Hong Kong NPC deputies can also become Selection Committee members if they are permanent Hong Kong residents.

The Selection Committee formation rules might lead people to believe that Beijing has adopted a more relaxed Hong Kong policy. For instance, Selection Committee member qualifications do not include “leftist” proposals collected during opinion-soliciting activities such as “love the motherland and Hong Kong,” “identify with the motherland and the Chinese nation,” and “pledge loyalty to the SAR.” Qualification evaluations will be made by nominating organizations rather than the Preparatory Committee or a special group under the committee established for this purpose. The original proposal that only widely recognized, representative organizations with a certain status and influence can nominate candidates has been abandoned, and no ceiling has been set on the number of nominations an organization can make. Hoping that the Selection Committee’s legitimacy can be widely recognized in the future, Beijing has repeatedly emphasized that the Selection Committee formation procedures are in accordance with democracy, justice, and openness principles and that Selection Committee members will be extensively representative of the popular will.

However, it should be noted that the list of Selection Committee candidates will be finalized by the Preparatory Committee presidium and nominees will be elected by a Preparatory Committee plenum. This election method obviously goes against democracy and openness principles, as it will enable Beijing to effectively control electoral procedures. It appears that Beijing’s chief objective is to control the number of radical democrats elected to the Selection Committee in order to ensure its guiding role in the selection of the SAR chief executive and the organization of the provisional legislature.

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