

Recommendations made by ECI on Electoral reforms

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Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy: It constitutes the most significant topic after recent elections in 2019. The role of ECI and the need for various reforms have become a moot point. Keeping that in mind this article has been chosen. The proposals made hint at the loopholes at present which may be put as a prelims question.

In news: Recently ECI published 25 of the main recommendations for electoral reforms and has invited suggestions from the public till March 31, 2020.

Placing it in syllabus: Election commission

Content: **Nine working groups** were constituted after the Lok Sabha election by Election Commission of India (ECI) comprising ECI officials and State Chief Electoral Officers. These groups had presented their draft recommendations on February 18, 2020.

Some of the **recommendations** are:

- **Aadhaar-Voter ID linkage** to weed out duplications and misrepresentations from the electoral rolls.
- New voting methods which remain secure and safe to ease and improve the electoral participation.
- **Capping the campaign expenditure** of political parties.
- Registration of new voters and change of address with **one single form** to address the confusion created.
- **Starting online registration** facilities at the school or college-level for all **prospective voters at 17 years of age** so they can be enrolled in the electoral roll as

soon as they become eligible at 18.

- The ECI also recommended **four cut-off dates in a year to enroll as a voter** – January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1, while the Law Ministry has suggested two dates – January 1 and July 1. (Currently, only those who turn 18 by January 1 of that year are registered as voters).
- ECI has proposed to give out **electronic versions of the voter ID card – EPIC**, for the convenience of voters.
- **Online nomination of candidates**
- Imposing a **“silence period of 48 hours”** before polling on social media and print media.
- **Giving ‘remote’ voting rights to domestic migrant workers.**



▪ **Service voter:**

Amendments to Section 20(6) of the Representation of People’s Act (ROPA) to allow the husband of a female officer to be **registered as a service voter** where she holds office. Service voters refer to those in government service and defence who may be posted in locations different from the area where they are registered as voters.

As of now, **sub-section (8) of Section 20 of RPA** only allows the wife of a male ‘service voter’ to cast her vote as a service voter. Hence ECI has recommended to the law ministry that a more **gender neutral word ‘spouse’ should be used** so that husbands residing with serving wives may also be able to vote.

The current rules also do not permit children of a service voter residing with him to be enrolled as service voters. Hence the ECI has suggested that the **same rights be given to children of service voters who are residing with them and are eligible to vote.**