



**Joint News Conference Statement
by the
Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica
and the
Electoral Commission of Jamaica**

December 14, 2011

We are pleased to announce today that there have been a series of voluntary agreements by the main political parties and all major media organizations relating to campaigning and political broadcasts in Jamaica.

The agreements introduce new cutoff timelines for election campaigning, for political advertising and for the release of public opinion poll results. They therefore create for the first time in Jamaica a campaign-free period of at least one full day ahead of voting in the December 29 General Elections.

As part of their voluntary undertaking, the political parties have agreed to cease political broadcasts and campaign advertising from midnight on December 27 on radio and television and to provide no new campaign Ads on the Internet. In considering this commitment, both print and electronic media have voluntarily decided to also discontinue disseminating political broadcasts and media campaign advertising, in the same timeframe ahead of the start of polling.

This means that all electronic media organizations will stop carrying political campaign ads from midnight on December 27, through to the opening of polls at 7 am on December 29.

For national daily newspapers, this means that no campaign political ads will appear in the December 28 and December 29 editions.

OPINION POLLS

Regarding the matter of Opinion Polls, the political parties agreed that no results from any new opinion polls or of any unscientific opinion surveys, will be released to the public within **48 hours** of the start of voting in the general elections.

For their part, the media organizations have agreed that the results of such public opinion polls or unscientific opinion surveys would not be released to the public in the **24 hour** period prior to the start of polling in the elections.

BACKGROUND & EFFECT

These voluntary decisions have arisen following successive rounds of consultations by the Electoral Commission with the political parties and by the Broadcasting Commission with the media owners.

The agreements now effectively secure for the public a period of at least a full day free of election campaigning on the ground and without partisan political advertising in the media over this period.

This will allow citizens to contemplate their electoral choices without the intensity and pressure of last minute campaign messages or new opinion polls results.

NEW GROUND

A significant part of these voluntary agreements represents the breaking of new ground, in the promotion of peaceful and civil conduct in our

electoral and media environments, and particularly in the lead-up to voting in Jamaica.

The different timelines agreed by the political parties and the media organizations re opinion polls do not represent any significant conflict in attaining the shared goal of securing a quiet period for citizens before the start voting.

Certain other aspects of the voluntary agreement by the political parties mirror existing provisions in the broadcasting regulations, and indicate the close collaboration that has taken place between these two national Commissions.

The other provisions include the requirements for fair play in airtime allocation and the awarding of equivalent concessions in financial arrangements for advertising and other broadcasts.

COMMENDATION

We thank and commend the political parties and the operators of the electronic, cable and print media in Jamaica, for entering into these voluntary agreements in the public interest.

This development is particularly appropriate at this time of the year, and also on the eve of Jamaica's 50th independence anniversary.

In closing, we wish for all Jamaicans a peaceful election, a blessed Christmas and prosperity in the New Year.

Presented by Professor Hopeton Dunn, Chairman, Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica and endorsed by Professor Errol Miller, Chairman, Electoral Commission of Jamaica.