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From:

Date:2006/11/28 Tue PM 04:00:05 CST

To:pa-consultation@cab.gov.hk

CC:

Subject:Consultation: Further Development of Political Appointment System

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Dear Sir/Madam,

We are a group of Government Information Grade Officers (including one retiree) and we would like to give our views on the Consultation Document on the Further Development of the Political Appointment System.

Our views are contained in the attached document.

Please note that while we do not object to our views being made public, we prefer our identities to be kept confidential in future publications produced by the Administration.

(Name provided)

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**Views on
Consultation Document on
Further Development of
the Political Appointment System**

Preamble

We agree with the consultation document that there is a case for the further development of the Political Appointment System by creating new positions in the political tier at different levels in order to:

- (1) provide Principal Officials (POs) additional support to meet the demands of a people-based governance,
- (2) maintain the political neutrality of the civil service, and
- (3) provide a more comprehensive career path for political talents to pursue.

To this end, we support the proposals to create Deputy Directors (DDs) of Bureau and Assistants to Directors (ADs) of Bureau. We further propose the following regarding the positions of Press Secretaries with a view to further enhancing the system, taking into account the interest of the HKSAR Government and the need to meet the demands of strong and people-based governance.

Proposed changes

- (1) Positions of Press Secretaries be made political and be included in the proposed additional political appointments
- (2) IO Grade officers posted to fill the positions of Press Secretaries be appointed on a contract basis and may choose to return to the civil service on completion of the contract, and
- (3) The ranking of Press Secretaries be pitched at D1/D2 level.

In the interest of the HKSAR Government and people-based governance

Under the proposed set-up of the Principal Officials' Office outlined in the consultation document, the full range of political work would be carried out by the POs, DDs and ADs of Bureau. While the ADs would mainly assist POs and DDs in carrying out political work in relation to lobbying the community at large, the Press Secretaries would be responsible for lobbying the Fourth Estate, i.e. the mass media, in particular. No one will dispute the political nature of this important aspect of work that includes:

- (1) spinning the mass media to help promote government policies,
- (2) helping out in the networking with the mass media,
- (3) devising media and public relations strategies, and
- (4) projecting the proper image of the POs and DDs.

To further enhance the political appointment system in the interest of the HKSAR Government, it is vital and sensible that the positions of Press Secretaries be made political to be on a par with the DDs and ADs. The same principle should apply when considering ranking the Press Secretaries at D1/D2 level, which would also help attract better-qualified talents to take up such positions and reflect the importance of this aspect of work.

As proposed by the consultation document, the positions of Press Secretaries might continue to be filled by civil servants or by direct recruitment from outside the civil service.

Under the proposed contract arrangement, an IO Grade officer would be given a choice to return to the civil service (an arrangement similar to that applied to civil servants seconded to the Independent Commission Against Corruption) on completion of his or her term as a Press Secretary. This would help attract a bigger pool of talented professional IO staff, in particular younger ones, to join as Press Secretaries, which would in turn benefit the further development of the political appointment system.

The proposed contract arrangement would also enable ISD to retain staff talents should the Press Secretaries choose to return to the civil service on completion of their contracts. On returning to ISD, the political experience gained by the Press Secretaries would be of tremendous value to the further development of ISD, which is the main public relations machinery of the Government.

Resource implications

We agree with the consultation document that the additional positions to be filled by politically appointed officials would **not** be created at the expense of the existing civil service establishment. This is of particular importance to a small department such as ISD since no additional posts had been created when the political appointment system for POs was first introduced in July 2002. At that time, ISD had made available the required staff resources for 10 Press Secretary posts for POs (with the exception of that of SEM) by deleting and downgrading certain posts and as a result the levels and quality of services have unavoidably suffered despite strenuous efforts of ISD staff to maintain them. The opportunity should therefore be taken now to rectify the situation for the purpose of providing better media and public relations services to the government as a whole.

Conclusion

We realise that some of our proposals may not be entirely in line with the proposals as outlined in the consultation document. However, in the interest of the HKSARG and the need to meet the demands of strong and good governance, we strongly propose that:

- (1) positions of Press Secretaries be made political and be included in the proposed additional political appointments
- (2) IO Grade officers posted to fill the positions of Press Secretaries be appointed on a contract basis and may choose to return to the civil service on completion of the contract, and
- (3) the ranking of Press Secretaries be pitched at D1/D2 level.

Submitted by :

(Name provided)

Note : While we do not object to our views being made public, we prefer our identities to be kept confidential in future publications produced by the Administration.

November 28, 2006

(Editor's Note: The sender requested anonymity.)