



CIVIL

Greater Bengaluru Governance (Registration of Electors) Rules, 2025: A Walk-Through

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Bengaluru's civic elections have long been fought on old, patched-up voter lists borrowed from assembly constituencies. On 15 September 2025 the Karnataka government ended that habit by notifying the final version of the Greater Bengaluru Governance (Registration of Electors) Rules, 2025, a detailed code that tells the State Election Commission exactly how to prepare, display, correct, freeze and preserve a brand-new roll for every city-corporation ward. The journey began a month earlier when the draft was placed in the extra-ordinary gazette of 22 August; no objections arrived, and the file moved swiftly from the Urban Development Department's desk to the statute book. The rules are now law, and every name that appears, or disappears, on a ward roll will be governed by them.

The very first section gives the rules their short title and the immediate date of effect, but it is the second clause that supplies the dictionary. "Act" means the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act of 2024, "roll" is the ward-wise list of electors, "Registration Officer" is the person the Commission nominates, while "Assistant Registration Officer" and the assorted Forms carry the same labels the Commission uses in assembly elections. Anything not defined here borrows its meaning from the Representation of the People Act, 1950, so the city and the state speak the same electoral language.

Instead of starting from scratch the rules allow the Commission to adopt the current legislative-assembly roll for the overlapping area and then prune, add or transpose entries so that only those who actually live in the ward remain. This adoption is not an open-ended licence: once the last date for filing nominations for a ward election is notified, the roll is frozen; no civic body can slip in a new name or remove an old one until the election is completed. The freeze is repeated in almost every later chapter and has become the rules' principal safeguard against last-minute manipulation.

The roll itself must be prepared in Kannada or English, split into convenient numbered parts, and printed in the format prescribed as Form-1. Within each part names are arranged street by street and house by house, and the serial numbers begin afresh with every part so that a polling station never faces an unmanageable block of numbers. The physical preparation is done by enumerators who are, in effect, borrowed from the city's own establishments. The registration officer sends every occupant a Form-2 letter requesting a list of adult citizens who ordinarily live in the premises; the occupant is legally bound to fill the enclosed enumeration card and hand it back. If a dispute arises over who is an ordinary resident the Commission will use the instructions printed on the same form to decide the question. Teachers, civic staff and employees of aided schools can be commandeered for enumeration duty, and they may work part-time or full-time so long as they finish within the schedule set by the Commission.

To double-check the information the registration officer and his team are given statutory right of access to birth and death registers and to the admission records of every school. Heads of institutions must supply extracts on demand, a small clause that stitches together the city's fragmented data sets and keeps ghost voters out. Once the raw sheets are ready the officer prepares a draft roll, displays it at his office, every polling station and other prominent places, and simultaneously uploads the PDF on the city-corporation website. A Form-3 notice tells citizens the qualifying date and invites claims and objections.

The invitation is open for only seven days, though the Commission can extend it ward-wise. Anyone who wishes to add his name must use Form-4, countersigned by an already-enrolled neighbour; an objection to someone else's name needs Form-5 with a similar countersignature; corrections in age or spelling are made through Form-6; movement from one part of the roll to another needs Form-7; and deletion on account of death or permanent shift requires Form-8. All these papers can be filed in person, by post or through a mobile-linked online portal the corporation must maintain. A duplicate set of every application is pasted on the notice board so that the neighbourhood can scrutinise it in real time.

Designated officers who receive the applications keep two registers (one for the office, one to send forward) and forward the forms with brief remarks to the registration officer. He, in turn, enters every claim and objection in the master registers Forms 9 to 11-B and exhibits them afresh. Anything filed late or in the wrong form is rejected without a hearing, but if the officer is satisfied from the papers he can allow the claim after keeping it on display for a week. A written demand for inquiry from any elector stops this short-cut and forces a hearing.

When hearings are needed the officer fixes the date, time and place and serves individual notices. Claimants receive Form-12, objectors get Form-13 and the person whose name is objected to is summoned through Form-14. Service may be personal, through an authorised messenger, by registered post or even by affixing the notice on the last known residence. The inquiry itself is summary; the officer can administer an oath and anyone who can help establish the truth is allowed to speak. A brief speaking order is passed and added to the amendment list.

Sometimes names are left out by pure oversight. The officer can draw up a supplementary list, publish it and, after hearing objections, add the names. Conversely, if dead persons or those who have moved away are still on the roll he can prepare a deletion list, give the affected elector a reasonable opportunity to show cause, and then remove the names. All these changes are gathered into a final amendment sheet.

The roll is now ready for publication. The officer displays the complete final roll together with the amendment list and issues a Form-16 notice announcing that the document is the authoritative electoral roll of the ward. Two free copies are given to every recognised national and state party. The amendments may be physically merged into the basic roll to make future reference easier, but the original entries cannot be altered while doing so, and once again no change is permitted after the last date for nominations.

An elector who feels aggrieved by any decision can appeal to an officer designated by the State Election Commission within fifteen days. The appeal is filed as a memorandum accompanied by a copy of the order and it does not stay the operation of the registration officer's decision. The appellate order is final, but if it overrules the officer the change takes effect only from the date of the appellate decision and the roll is amended accordingly.

Rolls are to be revised every year, either intensively or summarily or in a mixed mode. In an intensive revision the entire exercise starts afresh and every rule is repeated; in a summary revision only an amendment list is prepared from readily available data and put through the same drill of display, claims, objections and hearings. Mid-year directions from the Commission to include names must be honoured unless there is a valid objection on the ground of eligibility.

Outside the revision cycle an elector can seek correction or inclusion at any time by filing the appropriate forms in duplicate. The registration officer displays the request for seven days, hears any objection that turns up and passes a speaking order. An appeal from this order lies to the District Election Officer within the same fifteen-day window, and delay can be condoned for sufficient cause.

To reduce impersonation the Commission can order photo-identity cards for any ward. The registration officer will then prepare a card in duplicate at government cost, affix the elector's photograph and his own facsimile signature and hand one copy to the voter. If the elector refuses to be photographed or cannot be found after repeated visits the fact is noted and no card is issued, but the name stays on the roll.

Once the election is over the officer must preserve one complete copy of the roll and every connected paper (enumeration cards, claim files, appeal orders) for at least one year beyond the next intensive revision. One authenticated copy is kept as a permanent record and any citizen can inspect the bundle or pay for attested copies. After the preservation period the papers are destroyed under the District Election Officer's supervision, while surplus printed copies can be sold to the public at a price fixed by the Commission.

A special chapter allows the Commission to dispense with door-to-door enumeration altogether and simply adopt the current legislative-assembly roll, ward-bounded and cleansed, for city-corporation elections. All the freeze clauses and appeal provisions apply to this short-cut method as well.

Every officer or member of staff who works on the rolls is deemed to be on deputation to the State Election Commission and remains under its control and discipline. Any registration officer, enumerator or assistant who commits a deliberate breach of duty without reasonable cause is guilty of gross misconduct and faces disciplinary action on the binding recommendation of the District Election Officer.

These rules, running to thirty-two sections and as many forms, turn the abstract promise of universal adult franchise into a house-by-house, street-by-street reality. They give the ordinary resident of Bengaluru the right to watch his name being written, questioned, moved or removed, and they give the city a living document that will shape its local democracy for every election that follows.

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