

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

April 19, 2017

To the friends gathered for
the annual election of their
Local Spiritual Assemblies

Dearest Bahá'í Friends,

One of Shoghi Effendi's first acts as Guardian of the Faith was to call for the election, in every locality where nine or more believers resided, of Local Spiritual Assemblies. As early as March 1922, just months after the Master's passing, we find him stressing the "sacredness of their nature, the wide scope of their activity, and the grave responsibility which rests upon them." A year later, he was fixing the first day of the Festival of Ridván as the date on which believers in local Bahá'í communities across the globe would cast their ballots, counseling that:

[E]very declared believer of 21 years and above, far from standing aloof and assuming an indifferent or independent attitude, should regard it his sacred duty to take part conscientiously and diligently, in the election, the consolidation[,] and the efficient working of his own local Assembly.

Throughout the 36 years of his ministry, the beloved Guardian labored assiduously to help the Bahá'í community understand the dynamics of the Administrative Order they had begun to build, its indissoluble bond with the spiritual verities of their Faith, and its vital necessity as the "nucleus" and the "very pattern" of Bahá'u'lláh's peaceful and just New World Order, "destined to embrace, in the fullness of time, the whole of mankind." Thus was the groundwork laid for the Bahá'í electoral process we joyfully take part in nearly a century later.

The Spiritual Assemblies we elect today will increasingly be challenged by the complexities of new tasks—beyond their familiar administrative functions—they will be called upon to discharge. As they strive to meet these challenges successfully, they will find themselves gradually acquiring new institutional skills and abilities—a greatly enhanced capacity—that will fit them for the key role they must play, as the Universal House of Justice has many times indicated, in the community-building work of the Divine Plan that is and will for decades to come be taking place in clusters—and in neighborhoods—throughout the country. In such wise will "the wide scope of their activity" continue to grow.

Casting our ballots, then, in accordance with the principles established by Bahá'u'lláh and further defined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, closely adhering to the procedures meticulously elaborated by the beloved Guardian, let us be mindful of the privilege that is ours, executors of "a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace," proponents of "the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth."

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
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Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary