



Wall Street Journal

August 10, 2020.

Dear Editor,

Your August 2 editorial, “The China Vise Tightens on Hong Kong,” contained a number of misleading statements, including the reasoning behind the postponement of Hong Kong’s Legislative Council election from September 6, 2020 to September 5, 2021.

Since July, Hong Kong has been battling a third wave of COVID-19 infections – our worst outbreak to date, which has resulted in the strictest containment measures yet. From July 1 to August 3, Hong Kong saw more than 2,300 confirmed cases – almost twice as many as the preceding six months. If not handled quickly and decisively, the current wave of infections could spiral out of control and overwhelm our public hospital system. Given the increase in community transmissions, particularly those of unknown origin, meaningful electioneering activities are no longer possible. Stringent boundary control measures make it impossible for registered Hong Kong voters to return from overseas or the mainland of China to cast their votes. Legal, practical and time constraints mean that extra polling days, postal voting or e-voting are also not feasible.

The decision to postpone the Legislative Council (LegCo) election, in short, was taken to protect public health as well as the rights of Hong Kong voters.

Hong Kong is not alone in prioritising public health over polls. The Swedish-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance has found that at least 69 countries and territories decided to postpone national and subnational elections because of COVID-19 between February 21 and August 2 this year. Hong Kong is among them; others may follow.

Your editorial notes that 12 nominees for our LegCo election were disqualified but does not adequately explain why they will not be allowed to run for office. They were barred for not genuinely complying with the statutory declaration requirement to uphold the Basic Law – to support, promote and embrace it – and to pledge allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The Government has a duty to ensure that all elections are conducted in accordance with the Basic Law, our constitutional document and the legal foundation for the HKSAR's establishment.

People in the United States will understand this. The Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the oath of office taken by elected officials and judicial officers have long been fundamental features of American community and political life.

The Hong Kong SAR Government attaches the utmost importance to ensuring, and protecting, the constitutional right of Hong Kong people to take part in, and to stand for, elections. This we will do freely, openly and in good faith in September next year.

Yours sincerely,



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