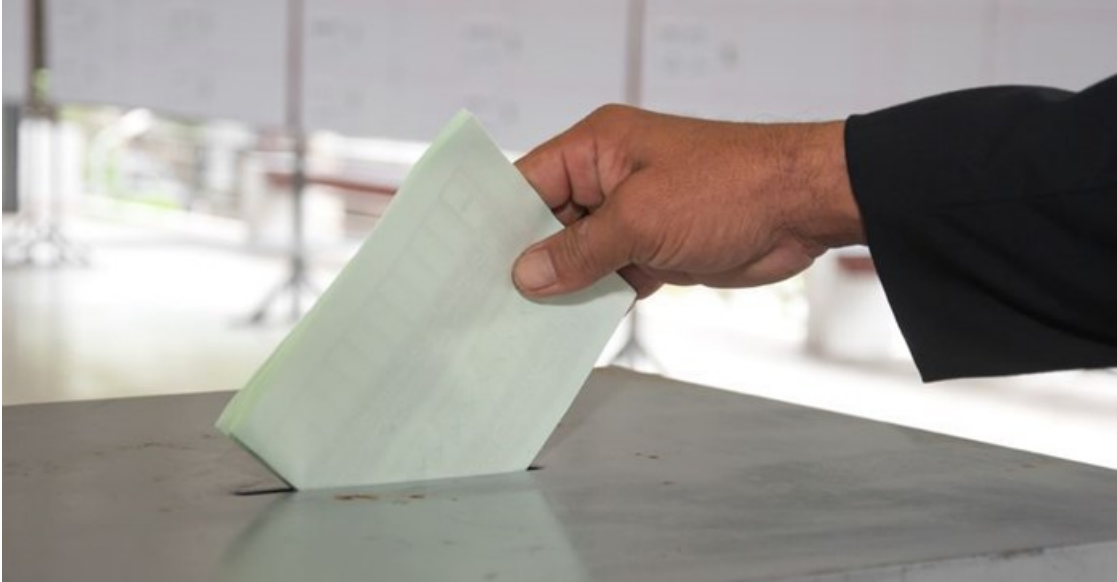


Nominations for legal council open

Justice and Correctional Services Minister Michael Masutha has officially signalled the beginning of the nomination process for legal practitioners to serve on the inaugural South African Legal Practice Council.



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Masutha said the council has to be established by 1 November 2018. The process began in 2015 with the establishment of the National Forum of the Legal Profession.

The task of the forum was to provide a legislative framework for the transformation and restructuring of the legal profession in line with constitutional imperatives. This is done with the end goal of building an independent legal profession that broadly reflects the diversity and demographics of the country, as set out in the Legal Practice Act.

The council, Masutha said, will exist as a national body with provincial structures throughout the nine provinces. The provincial structures will be established after the national body has been finalised.

“The Legal Practice Council replaces the four statutory provincial law societies which have to date fulfilled the dual purpose of regulating and representing attorneys. Advocates and attorneys will now be regulated by the Legal Practice Council,” the minister said.

Bar associations will no longer have the responsibility to regulate the profession, however, they can continue to exist as

voluntary associations to advance any non-statutory interests of the profession.

Masutha said the nomination process was an important milestone in the transformation of the legal profession.

One of the benefits expected to be produced by the council is the establishment of community service, through which aspirant and serving legal practitioners will be required to perform community service to increase access to justice.

The council will also see the enhancement of the accountability arrangements of the legal profession through the establishment of the legal service ombud, Masutha said.

The council is also expected to oversee the transformation of the process for the conferral of senior counsel status (or silk status) through the creation of a transparent nomination process, which is based on the expertise and experience of legal practitioners.

The National Forum of the Legal Profession chairperson, Advocate Kgomotso Moroka, pleaded with legal practitioners to make their voices heard during this process.

“We have very tight timeframes so I ask and plead with members of the legal profession – attorneys and advocates – to start nominating the attorneys they want to serve on the council. I urge you all to take advantage of this process to make a difference.”

Nomination forms, Moroka said, have already been distributed to attorneys on Monday but forms are also available on the Department of Justice, the Law Society of South Africa and the National Forum of the Legal Profession and Bar Council websites.

Nominations will close on midnight 14 September. Ballot papers will be printed and sent to legal practitioners for voting on 19 September and close on 30 September.

Counting will be done between 1 and 3 October. Voting results will be announced on 5 October.

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