



NOTA – Is it a good step?

## Description

### Background :-

- NOTA means “None of the above”. This option is being included in Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) from 2014 general elections. People can vote for NOTA, if they think that all the candidates, who are contesting don't deserve the vote.
- In 2004, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), an NGO filed a petition that voters be given the 'right to negative voting'.
- Supreme Court agreed with the PUCL's plea in September 2013 and directed Election Commission (EC) to implement NOTA option in EVMs.
- Even before the NOTA option, there exists a rule 49-O in Representation of People's Act (1961) that allows voters to not cast their vote to anyone. If someone want to use 49-O rule, he/she has to inform the decision to the polling officer and fill the regarding from and thus rejecting all the candidates. It has nothing to do with the result of elections, but ensures that his/her vote is not misused. The drawback here is that, there will be no secrecy for the person, who uses this rule.
- The concept of negative voting already exists in 13 countries. Different countries consider the results of NOTA votes in different ways. In India, if NOTA votes are in majority, the next highest majority candidate will win the elections. Thus election results will not be modified by NOTA option.

### In Favor :-

- NOTA option will force the political parties to select the honest candidates, i.e with no criminal records.
- NOTA ensures people's 'right to freedom of speech and expression'.
- The disadvantage of 49-O will be overcome with the implementation of NOTA.
- This will increase the polling percentage.

### In Against :-

- Even if majority people vote for NOTA, the next highest majority candidate will be elected. So, it is not giving the chance to reject and disqualifying the candidates.
- People may think like why they should stand in a long line to vote for NOTA, when it doesn't effect the results.

**Conclusion :-**

Though NOTA option will have no effect on the results, it is definitely a good step because at least people are given the right to express their opinion regarding the contestants. It will definitely leads to decriminalization of politics. We should consider NOTA as the first step and we need to work more on this option to make it as Right to Reject (means power to disqualify the candidates and to opt for re-elections).

**Afterwords :-** What are your thoughts on this topic? Feel free to express your opinion in the comment section below.