

Preserving Independent and Accountable Institutions

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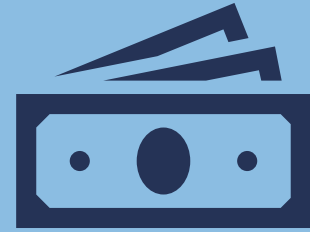
International Foundation for
Electoral Systems



Election Management Bodies



Human Rights Commissions



Anti-Corruption Agencies



Information Commissions



Supreme Audit Institutions

What are Independent Governmental Institutions?



ELECTION
MANAGEMENT
BODIES



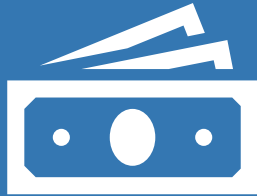
- ✓ Preserve the integrity of the electoral process during the pandemic
- ✓ Coordinate with public health authorities to adapt election operations and secure supplies
- ✓ Train election workers on new safety protocols
- ✓ Communicate preventive measures and changes to stakeholders
- ✓ Oversee campaign finance and the use of government resources for political purposes during pandemic elections



HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSIONS

- ✓ Advise governments on how to protect human rights while applying emergency measures
- ✓ Widely share information about the rights individuals maintain during the pandemic
- ✓ Report on human rights to international and regional mechanisms

ANTI-
CORRUPTION
AGENCIES



- ✓ Monitor COVID-19 spending and identify areas of risk of corruption
- ✓ Provide government with advice on corruption prevention measures in the use of COVID-19 funds
- ✓ Investigate allegations of corrupt conduct in COVID-19 spending and refer cases for prosecution

INFORMATION COMMISSIONS



- ✓ Continue to uphold access to information during emergency measures, particularly around transparency of COVID-19 health data, spending, and abrogation of rights
- ✓ Encourage proactive disclosure to reduce burden on government agencies to respond to requests



SUPREME
AUDIT
INSTITUTIONS

- ✓ Get government commitment that emergency public spending will be in line with the law and regulations
- ✓ Provide advice on sound public financial management
- ✓ Conduct performance audits on emergency social assistance, crisis preparedness plans and other systems relevant to the COVID response



What makes
Independent
Institutions
Effective?

Achieving a Balance Between Autonomy and Accountability



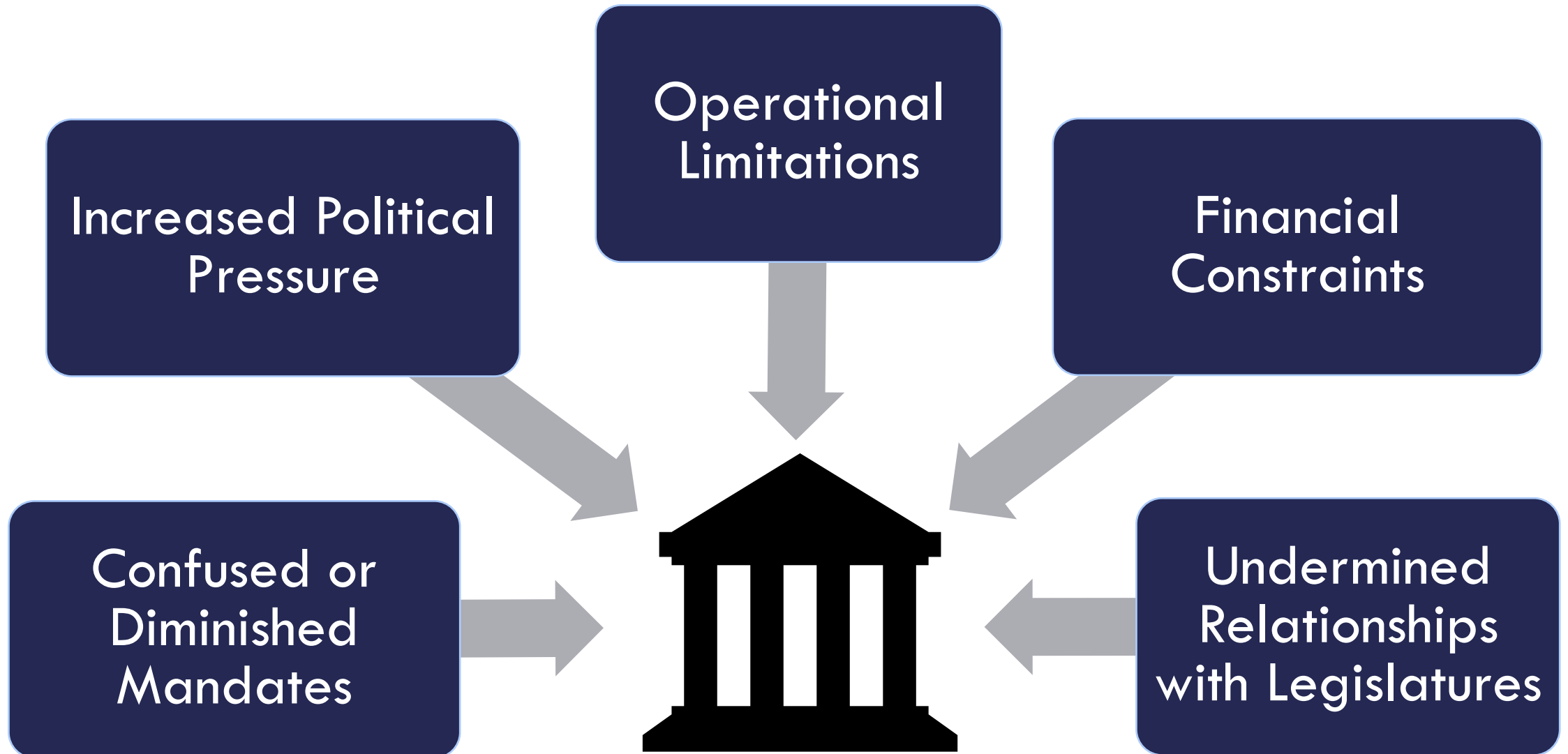
Institutional
Personnel
Financial
Functional
Behavioral

Autonomy

Statutory
Public
Internal

Accountability

COVID-19 Challenges for Independent Institutions



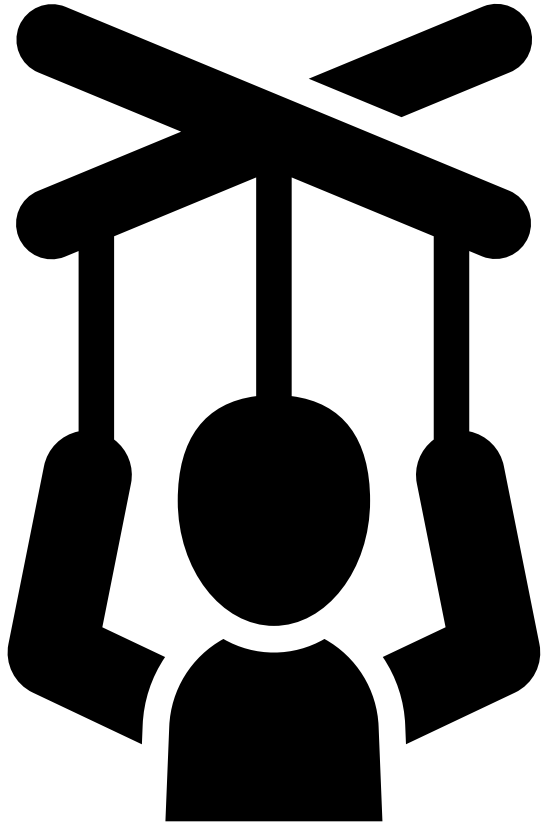


How can
independent
institutions
overcome COVID-19
threats to protect
democracy during
the crisis?

Confused or Diminished Mandates

- Assert and fulfill existing mandates
- Advocate for mandates to be clarified or expanded to oversee COVID-19 response
- Proactively monitor, report and issue recommendations in a timely manner





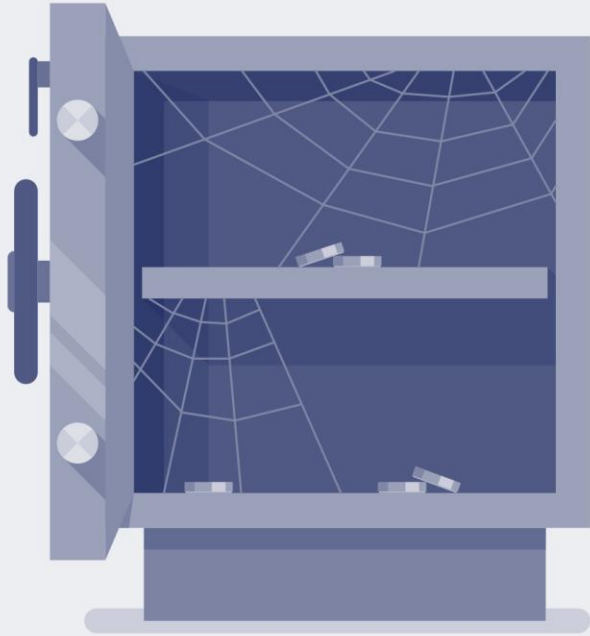
Increased Political Pressure

- Maintain transparency when working with partisan agencies or actors on crisis response
- Consider whether independent institutions should be exempted from COVID-19 measures to enable oversight

Operational Limitations

- Continue conducting oversight and providing services to the public
- Reassess priorities to best fulfill the institution's objectives
- Consider technological innovations that improve access to services and information
- Introduce new or revised cybersecurity protocols to enable the secure continuation of services in remote work environments





Financial Constraints

- Clearly articulate the “value add” of the institution’s work during the crisis
- Advocate for direct allocations in stimulus packages to account for the surge in operations
- Leverage relationships with civil society organizations to protect financial independence and resources
- Consider redirecting resources from usual activities to respond to the crisis

Achieving a Balance Between Autonomy and Accountability

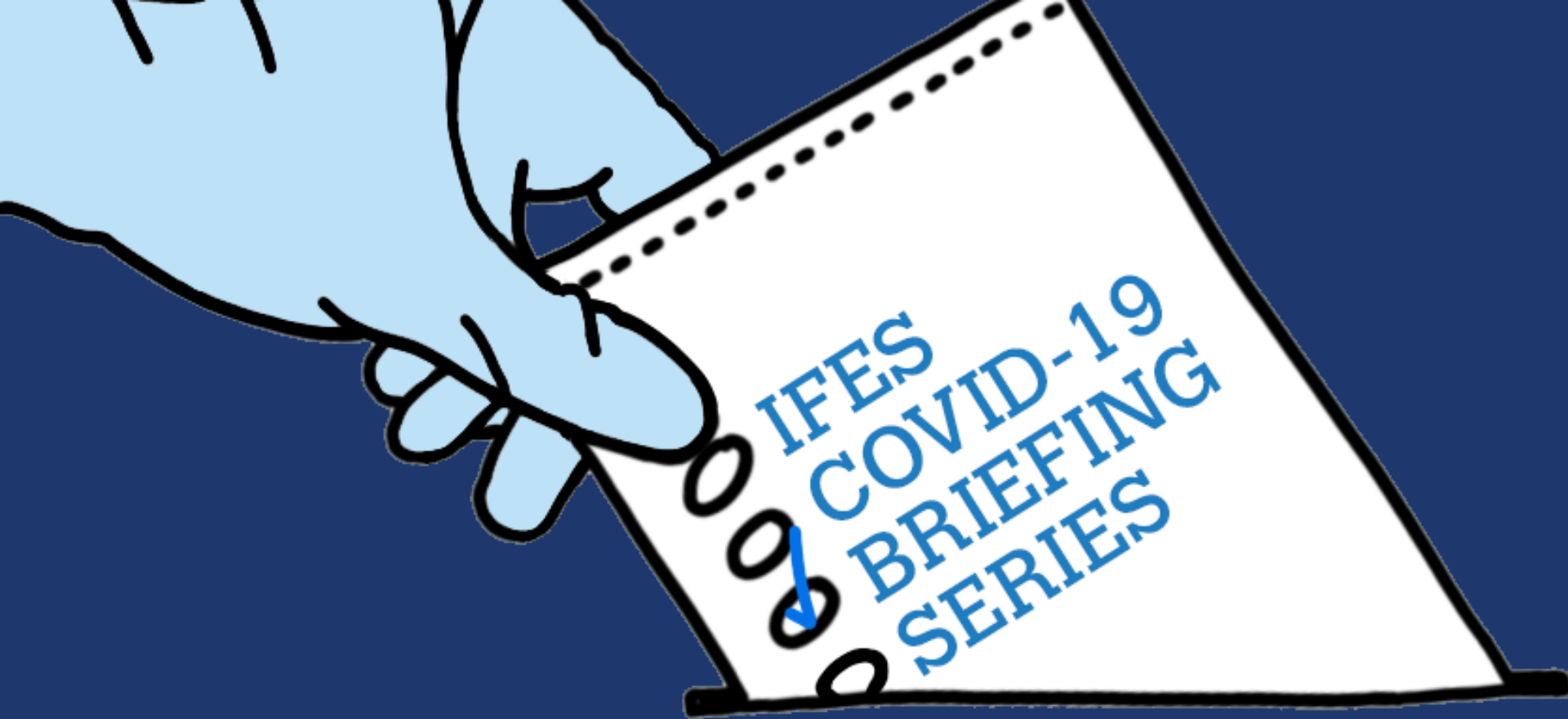


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Preventing Government Corruption in Crises

Katherine Ellena
Senior Global Legal Advisor
International Foundation for Electoral
Systems (IFES)



PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION IN CRISES

- Emergency spending & loss of transparency heightened opportunities for public sector corruption
- Corruption impacts the efficiency of crisis response & carries long term implications
- Priority areas of risk:
 - Procurement
 - Economic relief & stimulus
 - Political spending & use of state resources
 - Judicial independence and integrity



Public Procurement



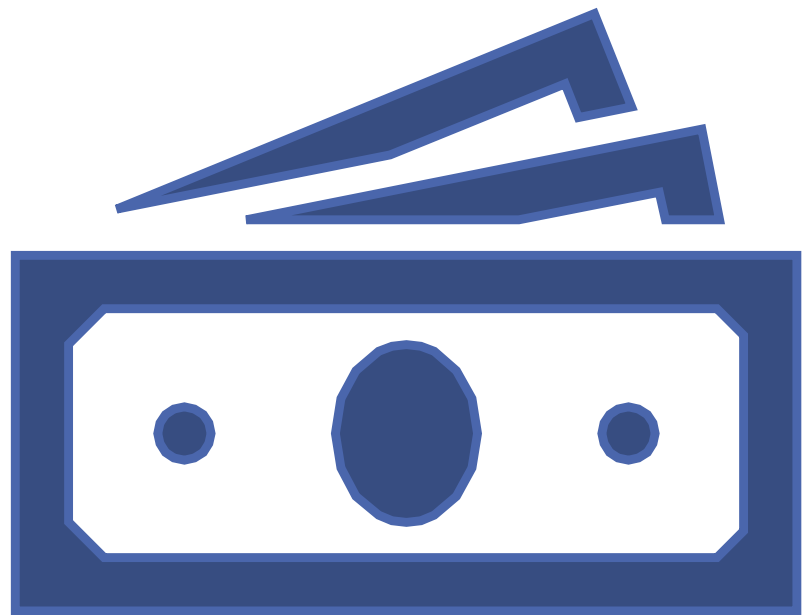
PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Short Term

- Analyze risks around counterfeit goods
- Maintain clear documentation
- Proactively publish information

Long Term

- Learn and adapt for future crises



Public
Spending:
Relief and
Economic
Stimulus



PUBLIC
SPENDING:
RELIEF AND
ECONOMIC
STIMULUS

- Adapt plans for monitoring and control of political finance & use of state resources
- Clearly define responsibilities & lines of communication for control and oversight of funds
- Maintain independent oversight mechanisms to monitor the use of funds
- Establish clear, fair and objective standards to determine eligibility
- Comply with disclosure and reporting requirements – and publish information proactively
- Maintain an independent complaints mechanism



Political Finance and Use of State Resources

POLITICAL FINANCE & USE OF STATE RESOURCES



Short term:

- Publish data & comply with disclosure requirements
- Proactively release statements on political finance monitoring

Longer term:

- Review the legal framework
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of online financial reporting systems
- Engage in dialogue with technology and social media companies



Judicial Independence and Integrity



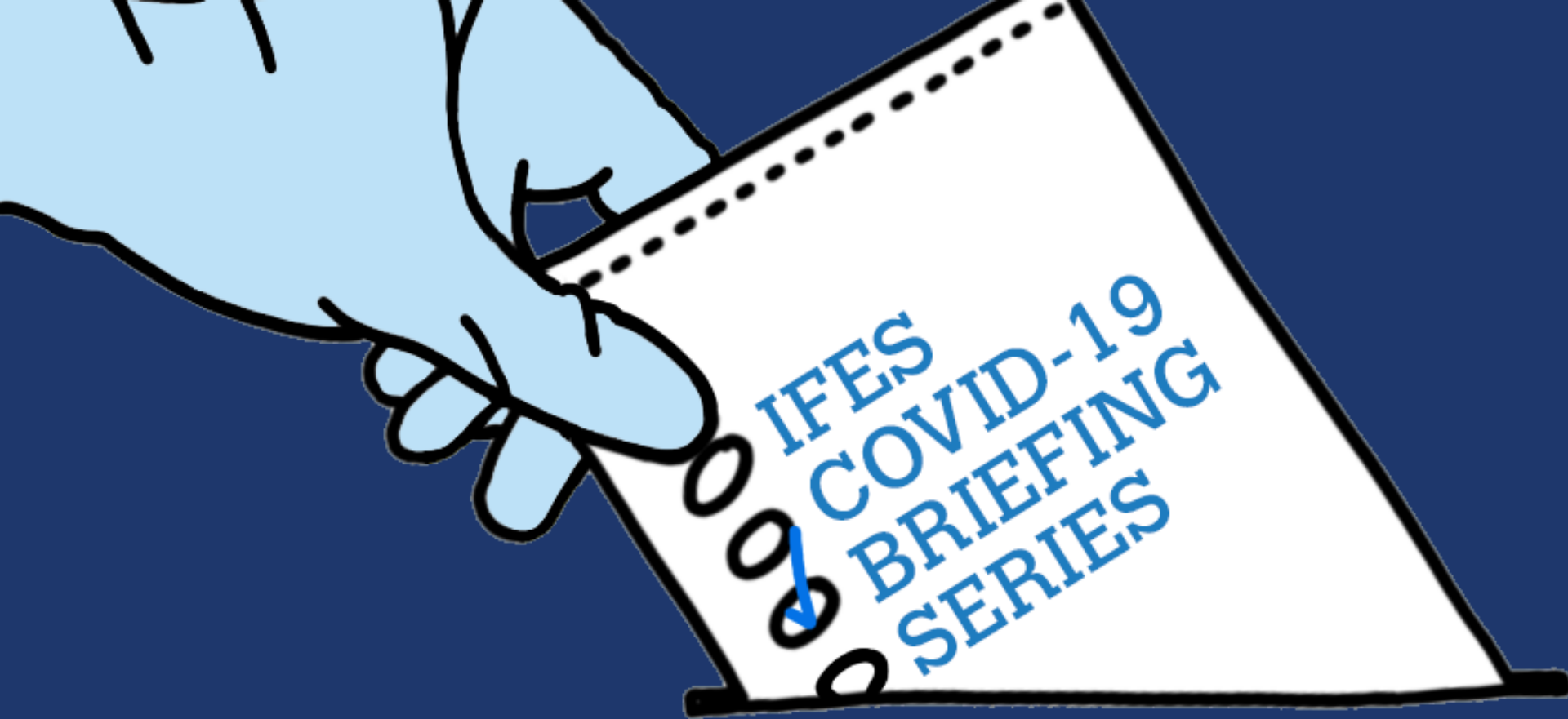
JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY

Short term

- Determine whether COVID-19's impact on court operations will affect timelines for election dispute resolution
- Reduce individual levels of discretion
- Keep judicial complaints mechanisms operable during a crisis.
- Support court monitoring & public access to proceedings on emergency measures.
- Monitor allegations of political interference in judicial processes.

Long term

- Review & strengthen judicial independence protections



Thank You