

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
FIRST REGULAR SESSION)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez

House Bill No. 2839

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Many states in America now allow early voting, in which ballots are cast prior to Election Day. The primary argument in favor of early voting is that it increases turnout by making it easier to vote. A research shows that in the 24 states in America with no excuse absentee voting, turnout increased in 2004 in the aggregate by 6.7 percent, whereas it increased 6.2 percent for the other states. In the 11 states that had early voting in both 2002 and 2004, turnout increased by an aggregate average of 7.2 percentage points as opposed to 6.2 in states without early voting.

In addition to the statistical evidence, early voting is advocated by voting rights groups whose primary concern is making voting as convenient as possible for voters, because it gives them significantly more time to complete their ballots or go to the polls.

Some election administrators also prefer early voting because it allows them more time to process ballots, relieves some of the strain on voting systems that occurs on Election Day, cuts down long lines, and reduces the number of poll workers needed.

This bill seeks to provide for early voting in the Philippines for the national and local elections. In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ

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AN ACT

PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING FOR QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to make voting convenient for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the election.

SEC. 2. *Early Voting.* – For national and local elections, there shall be early voting where senior citizens and PWDs qualified to vote early may choose to cast their ballot at accessible establishments designated by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) within seven (7) working days before the date set for the election.

SEC. 3. *Registration.* – There shall be a nationwide registration for senior citizens and PWDs who may wish to avail of their early voting privileges to qualify them for early voting. Those who are not registered under this Act shall vote on Election Day.

SEC. 4. *Obligations of the COMELEC.* – To ensure the smooth implementation of this Act, the COMELEC shall:

(a) Keep a record of senior citizens and PWDs who are registered voters;

(b) In coordination with local government units, the National Council on Disability Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Health and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, design a registration system that shall allow senior citizens and PWDs to register and opt for early voting in order to improve their voting experience in national and local elections;

(c) Ensure the full implementation of Republic Act No. 10366, entitled "An Act Authorizing the Commission on Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens", such that polling places are safe, highly accessible and fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids; and

(d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting by qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SEC. 5. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to fund early voting by qualified senior citizens and PWDs in national and local elections shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. *Applicability of Other Laws.* – The provisions of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881 or the Omnibus Election Code; Republic Act No. 7166, entitled "An Act Providing for Synchronized National and Local Elections and for Electoral Reforms, Authorizing

Appropriations Therefor, and for Other Purposes"; and other election laws not inconsistent herewith shall be applied to facilitate the early voting by qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the COMELEC shall, in consultation with other relevant government and nongovernment agencies, promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,