



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 7837



Introduced by **HON. EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The true spirit of democracy lies within every Filipino's right to vote. Being an essential act of a true sovereign community, the framers of the Constitution deemed it necessary to set the least amount of qualification and requirement to allow the majority of the population to fully exercise their right of suffrage and to have an accurate representation of the supreme voice of the people.

Means were devised to extend this right to our citizens outside the country in the form of absentee voting. However, while suffrage is viewed mainly as a political right that can transcend political boundaries, often overlooked is the fact that it also involves public health.

Our senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) persist their way to voting precincts despite health conditions just to cast their ballots and participate in the elections. Most of them endure long distances between their abode and their designated voting stations, restricted mobility, unventilated classrooms and overcrowded precincts. This should not be the case as the exercise of right to vote is not meant to prejudice the health of any sector especially our elders and PWDs.

With the proposed early voting system, our qualified senior citizens and PWDs would be able to vote ahead of the Election day and ensure that they would be able to participate in the elections by casting their ballots at accessible establishments without compromising their physical health.

To give a brief history, a similar bill (House Bill No. 5661) was already approved on third and final reading by the House of the Representatives during the 17th Congress. Therefore, the swift approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

Edward Marda
EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA
Representative, 4th District of Manila



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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING FOR QUALIFIED SENIOR
CITIZENS AND PERSON WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL AND
LOCAL ELECTIONS**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative 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 person with disabilities (PDWs) 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 of Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for person 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 election 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 Appropriation 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 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 of 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,