

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 342



INTRODUCED BY: HON. DANILO RAMON S. FERNANDEZ

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE CONDUCT OF HYBRID NATIONAL AND
LOCAL ELECTIONS, THROUGH MANUAL VOTING AND COUNTING
AT THE PRECINCT LEVEL, AND AUTOMATED TRANSMISSION AND
CANVASSING, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

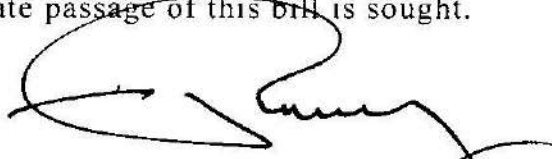
Republic Act No. 8436 was passed into law in 1997, mandating COMELEC (Commission on Elections) to utilize an automated election system. Republic Act 9369 was then enacted in 2007 to enable the COMELEC to conduct automated election in 2010 and in the succeeding local and national elections.

The coming to fruition of these fresh legislation prompted high hopes for the Filipino electorate. With the introduction of automation and with "less" human intervention in the electoral process, a general expectation of orderliness and credibility prevailed.

Unfortunately, observations on the conduct of the "automated" national and local elections turned out to be unsatisfactory and even frustrating. No less than President Rodrigo Duterte himself, after the recent 2019 elections, commented that COMELEC should let go of Smartmatic's VCMs (vote counting machines) come the 2022 polls. Compounding these were the problems encountered with the so called "glitches", involving the electronic transmission of canvass, SD cards, and even the use of challenging ballot markers.

In order to address this matter, this humble Representation followed on the suggestions of previous members of the House of Representatives, and offer this proposed measure.

In view of this objective, immediate passage of this bill is sought.


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AUTOMATED TRANSMISSION AND CANVASSING, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Title. This Act shall be known as *the The Hybrid Election Act*".

SEC. 2. Filing of Certificates of Candidacy. - The certificate of candidacy of any person running for the office of President, Vice-President, Senator, Member of the House of Representatives, Party-list Representatives or any elective provincial, city or municipal official shall be filed in five (5) legible copies with the offices of the Commission on Elections specified hereunder not later than the day before the date legally fixed for the beginning of his campaign period, TO WIT:

- (1) FOR PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT, SENATORS AND PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES, 90 DAYS BEFORE THE DAY OF ELECTIONS; AND
 - (2) FOR MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND ELECTIVE PROVINCIAL, CITY AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS, 45 DAYS BEFORE THE DAY OF THE ELECTION.
- (a) The certificate of candidacy for President, Vice-President, Senators and Party-list Representatives shall be filed with the main office of the Commission in Manila;

- (b) The certificate of candidacy for the Members of the House of Representatives shall be filed with the provincial election supervisor of the province concerned. Those for legislative districts in the National Capital Region shall be filed with the regional election director of said region and those for legislative districts in cities outside the National Capital Region which comprise one or more legislative districts shall be filed with the city election registrar concerned;
- (c) The certificate of candidacy for provincial offices shall be filed with the provincial supervisor concerned; and
- (d) The certificate of candidacy for city or municipal offices shall be filed with the city or municipal election OFFICER [registrar] concerned.

Whenever practicable, the names of registered candidates for local positions shall be printed in the election returns: Provided, That, if a candidate has been disqualified or declared a nuisance candidate, it shall be the duty of the Commission on Elections to instruct without delay the appropriate election officials to delete the name of said candidate as printed in the election return.

The certificate of candidacy shall be filed by the candidate personally or by his duly authorized representative. No certificate of candidacy shall be filed or accepted by mail, telegram or facsimile.

SEC. 3. Official Ballots. –

(a) Ballots for national and local elections, regular or special, plebiscites and referenda, shall be of uniform size and shall be prescribed by the Commission on Elections, taking into consideration environmental considerations, with a reasonable minimum paper size and using only recycled paper. They shall be printed in black ink on security paper with distinctive, clear and legible watermarks that will readily distinguish it from ordinary paper. Each ballot shall be in the shape of a strip with stub and detachable coupon containing the serial number BOTH ON THE UPPER AND LOWER DETACHABLE COUPON of the ballot, and a space for the thumbmark of the voter on the detachable coupon. It shall bear at the top of the middle portion thereof the coat-of-arms of the Republic of the Philippines, the word "Official Ballot," the name of the city or the municipality and province in which the election is to be held, the date of the election, and the following instruction in English: "Fill out this ballot secretly inside the voting booth. Do not put any distinct mark on any part of this ballot."

(b) The official ballot shall be serially numbered and shall be delivered to and correspond to specific precincts or cluster or precincts, as the case may be, which shall have corresponding and exclusive ballot identification numbers separate from the serial number of the individual ballots. For purposes of transparency, the ballot ID and the serial number of the ballots corresponding to each precinct or cluster or precincts, as the case

may be, shall be available for viewing by interested parties on the Commission on Elections' Official Website at least five (5) days before election day.

- (c) A digital image of a sample official ballot may be available for viewing and downloading from the Commission's website, minus the security features and actual bar codes for authentication.
- (d) The official ballot shall also contain the names of all the offices to be voted upon in the election, allowing opposite the name of each office, sufficient space of spaces with horizontal lines where the voter may write the name or names of the individual candidates being voted upon, as provided in the list of candidates and the corresponding elective positions, as pasted inside the inner flap of the ballot secrecy folder; Provided, *that: any* defacement, vandalism, marking or writing on said list inside the ballot secrecy folder, which shall in anyway suggest to the voter the candidate or candidates to be voted upon, or shall deprive said voter of his right to vote the candidates that he/she chooses to vote, shall constitute an election offense, as provided in this Act,
- (e) There shall not be anything printed or written on the back of the ballot.
- (f) Official ballot for cities and municipalities where Arabic is of general use shall have each of the titles of the offices to be voted for printed in Arabic in addition to and immediately below the English title.
- (g) The foregoing provisions notwithstanding, the Commission is hereby authorized to prescribe a different form of official ballot on the same watermarked security paper to facilitate voting by illiterate and specially abled voters only and to use or adopt the latest technological and electronic devices in connection therewith, as will enable such illiterate or specially abled voter to confirm that the accompanying person truly adhered to the former's choice of candidates, as provided under Section 52(i) of the Omnibus Election Code.

SEC. 4. Printing of Official Ballots. The printing of official ballots shall be exclusively done by the National Printing Office and may not be contracted *out or* outsourced *to any private or* public person, entity, *or agency.* *despite* claims of better or higher capacity to do so, not even under a valid accreditation pursuant to any law, rules or regulation.

A violation of this Section shall constitute a prima facie evidence of electoral sabotage and a conspiracy to commit massive electoral fraud.

SEC. 5. Authentication of Ballot and Signature of Chairman and Watchers at the Back of Every Ballot. - In every case before delivering an official ballot to the voter, the chairman of the board of election inspectors, in the presence of the poll watchers and the voter, scan the ballot under an official bar code

scanner to authenticate the same and thereafter the Chairman and the watchers for the dominant majority party and dominant minority party shall affix their signatures at the back thereof. Failure to so authenticate shall be noted in the minutes of the board of election inspectors and shall constitute an election offense punishable under Section 263 and 264 of the Omnibus Election Code. The same manner of authentication of the ballots under the bar code scanner shall likewise be observed before reading the ballot for counting the votes after the closing of the polls.

SEC. 6. Manner of Counting votes. In addition to the requirement in the fourth paragraph of Section 12 of the Republic Act No. 6646 and Section 210 of the Omnibus Election Code, in reading the official ballots during the counting, the chairman, the poll clerk and the *third member* shall assume such positions as to provide the watchers and the members of the public as may be conveniently accommodated in the polling place, an unimpeded view of the ballot being [ready] READ by the chairman, of the election return and the tally board being simultaneously accomplished by the, poll clerk and the third member respectively, without touching any of these election documents. The table shall be cleared of all unnecessary writing paraphernalia. Any violation of this requirement shall constitute an election offense punishable under Section 263 and 264 the Omnibus Election Code BEFORE THE START OF THE COUNTING, THE CHAIRMAN SHALL FIRST ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE BACK OF EVERY BALLOT CONTAINS THE SIGNATURES OF THE CHAIRMAN AND WATCHERS AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 5 HEREOF. ANY BALLOT WITHOUT SUCH SIGNATURES SHALL BE REJECTED.

- a. The chairman shall first read the votes for national positions and party list choices, and the necessary election returns shall be filled out for such positions only, thereby reducing the time for counting, as well as the size of paper to be utilized for the election returns. Thereafter, the members of the Board shall terminate the counting and prepare the election returns as they await distribution to the authorized watchers, as provided under Section 8 hereof.
- b. After the reading of the votes for the national positions and the party list, the Chairman shall then proceed with the reading of the votes for the local positions and the corresponding election return shall be filled out and prepared and distributed as provided in Section 8 hereof.

Any violation of this Section, or any of its pertinent portions, shall constitute an election offense and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

SEC. 7. Counting of Votes to be Public. - As soon as the voting is finished, the board of election inspectors shall publicly count in the polling place the votes cast and ascertain the results. The board may rearrange the physical set up of the polling place for the counting or perform any other activity with respect to the transition from vote counting. However, it may do so only in the

presence of the watchers and within close view of the public. At all times, the ballot boxes and all election documents and paraphernalia shall be within close view of the watchers and the public.

The board of election inspectors shall not adjourn or postpone or delay the count until it has been fully completed, unless otherwise ordered by the Commission on Elections.

The Commission on Elections, in the interest of free, orderly, and honest election, may authorize the board of election inspectors to count the votes and to accomplish the election return and other forms prescribed under the code in any other place within a public building in the same municipality or city on account of imminent danger of widespread violence or similar causes of comparable magnitude: *Provided*, That the transfer shall been recommended in writing by the board of election inspectors by unanimous vote and endorsed in writing by the majority of watchers present: *Provided*, further, that the said public building shall not be located within the perimeter of or inside a military or police camp, reservation, headquarters, detachment or field office nor within the premises of a prison or detention bureau or any law enforcement or investigation agency.

Any violation of this section, or any of its pertinent portions, shall constitute an election offense *and* shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

SEC. 8. Election Returns. - The board of election inspectors shall prepare the election returns simultaneously with the counting of votes in the polling places as prescribe in Section 210 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881. The recording of vote shall be made as prescribed in said section. The entry of votes in words and figures for each candidate shall be closed with the signature and the clear imprint of the thumbmark of the right hand of all the members, likewise to be affixed in full view of the public, immediately after the last vote recorded or immediately after the name of the candidate who did not receive any vote.

The returns shall also show the date of the election, the polling place, the barangay and the city or municipality in which it was held, the total number of ballots found in the compartment for valid ballots, the total number of valid ballots withdrawn from the compartment for spoiled ballots WHICH [because they] were erroneously placed therein. the total number of excess ballots, the total number of marked or void ballots, and the total numbers of votes obtained by each candidate, writing out the said number in words and figures and, at the end thereof, the board of election inspectors shall certify that the contents are correct. The returns for national positions and party-list shall be accomplished in a single sheet of paper, but if this is not possible, additional sheets may be used which shall be prepared in the same manner as the first sheet and likewise certified by the board of election inspectors.

The Commission on Elections shall take steps so that the entries on the first copy of the election returns are clearly reproduced on the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth copies thereof, and for the purpose the Commission shall use a special kind of paper.

Section 9. Digital Election Returns. Simultaneous to the counting of the votes and the filling out of the election returns, there shall be an independent technician who shall enter the votes, as they are counted, into a digital spread sheet, which shall serve as the Digital Election Return, in a laptop provided for the purpose, which spread sheet shall also be projected on a screen while the entries are recorded in real time for the watchers to validate and the public to see.

The Digital Election Return shall be equipped with such encryption and programs to ensure that the technician, or any person, cannot make alterations in any of the entries therein, or the results of the counting, except in case of discrepancy with the manual election return as provided below. Likewise, the laptop shall be configured to confine its operation only for this purpose and to transmit the results of the counting to a secure server as hereinafter prescribed.

Immediately upon the accomplishment of the manual election return for national positions, the poll clerk shall announce the posting of the second copy of the election return on a wall with sufficient lighting within the premises of the polling place or counting center. He shall then proceed to do the same in the presence of the other members of the Board, the watchers and those present in the polling place or counting center. Without delay and, when feasible, he shall secure an image of the election return using a secured data capturing device and immediately thereafter, while in the premises of the polling place or counting center, directly print thirty (30) copies of the manual election return.

Likewise, the independent technician, without turning off the projected results on the screen, shall print out one copy of the digital election return as filled out, and the members of the board and the poll watchers shall be asked to authenticate the same by comparing the results as printed with the second copy of the manual election return as posted and announced. Should the results of the digital election return be found to be the same as that of the manual, the members of the board and the poll watchers shall affix their signatures and thumb prints in the spaces provided and the same shall be placed in the compartment for valid ballots in the ballot box.

Should there be any discrepancy between the digital and the manual election returns, the results in the manual election return shall prevail.

However, for purposes of electronic transmission, the Chairman, the poll clerk and the third member shall encode their digital signatures into the laptop to allow the necessary corrections in the digital election return to conform to the results as reflected in the manual election return. The erroneous digital return

shall be torn by half lengthwise and placed inside the compartment for spoiled ballots inside the ballot box.

Thereafter, the technician shall print another copy of the digital election return and shall allow the board and the poll watchers to scrutinize and authenticate the same as prescribed above. When there is no more discrepancy in the results, the board and the poll watchers shall affix their signatures and thumb prints, and the correct digital election return shall be placed in the compartment for valid ballots inside the ballot box.

Finally, the board shall again enter their respective digital signatures to write-protect the memory card containing the digital election return and the image of the manual election return, and authorize the electronic transmission of the results to the various secure servers as prescribed herein.

Once the printouts for the image of the manual election return have been produced, the poll clerk shall call the other members of the board to authenticate each print copy by closely comparing the same with the election return posted on the wall in the presence of the watchers and within view of the public. If the Board finds each print a faithful reproduction of the election return, all members thereof shall annotate and sign a certification to that effect on the bottom front of the print.

Each certified printed copy shall be placed in an envelope and distributed as herein provided. Designated recipients of the certified print copies may receive their copies at the polling place or counting center.

Immediately upon the accomplishment of the election returns for local position, the second copy of the same shall be posted on a wall with sufficient lighting within the premises of the polling place.

The digital election return shall be printed out and authenticated as prescribed above for the national positions.

The other copies of election returns for both national and local position shall be sealed in the presence of the watchers and the public, and placed in the proper envelope, which shall likewise be sealed and distributed as herein provided.

Any election return with a separately printed serial number or which bears a different serial number from that assigned to the particular polling place concerned shall not be canvassed AND SHALL BE DECLARED AS SPURIOUS AND FAKE, and shall be a ground for a pre-proclamation controversy. This is to be determined by the board of canvassers prior to its canvassing on the basis of the certification of the provincial, city or municipal treasurer as to the serial number of the election return assigned to said voting precinct, unless the Commission shall order in writing for its canvassing, stating the reason for the variance in serial numbers.

If the signatures and/or thumbmarks of the members of the board of election inspectors or some of them as required in this provision are missing in the election returns, the board of canvassers may summon the members of the board of election inspectors concerned to complete the returns.

The citizen's arm is mandated to present for perusal its copy of the election return to the board of election canvassers upon the request of any interested candidate.

Any violation of this election or its pertinent portion, shall constitute an election offense and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881

SEC. 10. - Number of Copies of Election Returns and their Distribution. - The board of election inspectors shall prepare in handwriting the election returns in their respective polling place, in the number of copies herein provided and in the form to be prescribed and provided by the Commission.

The copies of election returns shall be distributed by the chairman of the board of election inspectors as follows:

- (a) In the election of president, vice-president, senators and members of the House of Representatives including the party-list representatives:
 - (1) The digital election return shall be electronically transmitted to the secure servers and the first copy of the manual election return, as digitally captured and printed, shall be delivered to city or municipal board of canvassers immediately after the closing of the polls;
 - (2) The second copy to be posted on a wall within the premises of the polling place;
 - (3) The third copy, to the congress, directed to the President of the Senate;
 - (4) The fourth copy, to the Commission on Elections;
 - (5) The fifth copy, to the dominant majority party as determined by the Commission on Elections in accordance with law;
 - (6) The sixth copy, to the dominant minority party as determined by the Commission on Elections in accordance with law;
 - (7) The seventh copy, to a citizens' authorized by the Commission on Elections to conduct an unofficial *count*: Provided, *however, That* the accreditation of the citizens' arm shall be subject to the provision of Section 52(k) of Batas Pambansa Bldg. 881; and

(8) The eight copy shall be deposited inside the compartment of the ballot box for valid ballots; and

(b) In the election of local officials;

(1) The digital election return shall be electronically transmitted to the secure servers and the first copy of the manual election return, as digitally captured and printed, shall be delivered to city or municipal board of canvassers immediately after the closing of the polls;

(2) The second copy to be posted on a wall within the premises of the polling place;

(3) The third copy, to the Commission on Elections;

(4) The fourth copy, to the provincial board of canvassers;

(5) The fifth copy, to the dominant majority party as determined by the Commission on Elections in accordance with law;

(6) The sixth copy, to the dominant minority party as determined by the Commission on Elections in accordance with law;

(7) The seventh copy, to a citizens' authorized by the Commission to conduct an unofficial count: Provided, however, That the accreditation of the citizens' arm shall be subject to the provisions of Section 52(k) of Batas Pambansa Bldg. 881; and

(8) The eighth copy shall be deposited inside the compartment of the ballot box for valid votes.

The *copy of the* election return posted on the wall shall be open for public viewing *at any time of the day* for forty-eight (48) hours following its posting. Any person may view or capture an image of the election return by means of any data capturing device such as, but not limited to, cameras at any time of the day for forty-eight (48) hours following its posting. After the prescribed period for posting, the chairman of the board of election inspectors shall collect the posted election returns and keep the same in his custody to be produced for image or data capturing as may be requested by any voter or any lawful purpose as may be ordered by competent authority.

Except for those copies that are required to be delivered, copies of election returns may be claimed at the polling place. Any unclaimed copy shall be brought by the chairman of the board of election inspectors to the canvassing center where the recipients or their representatives may claim them. Copies still unclaimed at the canvassing center shall be deemed placed in the custody of the chairman of the board of election inspectors.

who shall produce them when requested by the recipient or when ordered by a competent authority.

The Thirty (33) certified print copies of the election return for national positions shall be distributed as follows:

- (a) The first fourteen (14) copies shall be given to the fourteen (14) accredited major national parties in *accordance with* a voluntary agreement among them. If no such agreement is reached, the Commission on Elections shall decide which parties shall receive the copies on the basis of the criteria provided in Section 26 of Republic Act 7166.
- (b) The next three copies shall be given to the three accredited major local parties in accordance with a voluntary agreement among them. If no such agreement is reached, the Commission shall decide which parties shall receive the copies on the *basis of criteria* analogous to that provided in Section 26 of Republic Act 7166.
- (c) The next five copies shall be given to national broadcast or print media entities as may be equitably determined by the Commission on Elections in view of propagating the copies to the widest extent possible;
- (d) The next two copies shall be given to local broadcast or print media entities as may be equitably determined by the Commission on Elections in view of propagating the copies to the widest extent possible;
- (e) The next four copies to the major citizens' arms, including the accredited citizens' arms and other non-partisan groups or organizations enlisted by the Commission pursuant to Section 52(k) of Batas Pambansa Big. 881;
- (f) The next copy to be placed inside the compartment of the ballot box for valid ballots;
and
- (g) The last copy to the provincial board of canvassers.'

The certified print copies may be claimed at the polling place. Any unclaimed copy shall be brought by the chairman of the board of election inspectors to the canvassing center where the recipients or representatives *may* claim them. Copies still unclaimed at the canvassing center shall be placed in the custody of the chairman of the board election inspectors, who shall produce them when requested by the recipient or when ordered by a competent authority.

Any provision of law to the contrary notwithstanding, any of the recipients of the print or digital copies of the election return may conduct an unofficial consolidation of votes and may announce the result to the public.

The Commission shall post its digital files in its website for the public to view or download at any time of the day. The Commission shall maintain the files at least three years from the date of posting.

Any violation of this section, or its pertinent portion, shall constitute an election offense and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Big. 881;

SEC. 11. The Use of a Tally Board Not Allowed. The use of a tally board, commonly used by Boards of Election inspectors at the precinct level is no longer allowed and shall be replaced by the projected real-time input of results in the digital election return, as provided above.

SEC. 12. Canvassing by Provincial City, District, and Municipal Board of Canvassers. -

a) The City or municipal board of canvassers shall canvass the ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED election return for President, Vice president, Senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES and Members of the House of Representatives and for elective provincial and city or municipal officials: *Provided, That the returns for national positions shall be canvassed first.* Upon completion of the canvass, it shall prepare the certificate of canvass for Representatives and elective provincial officials, announce the results of the election for national positions in the city or municipality and, thereafter, proclaim the elected city or municipal officials, as the case may be.

b) The city board of canvassers of cities comprising one or more legislative districts shall canvass the ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED election returns for president, vice-president, senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE, members of the House of Representatives and elective city officials: *Provided, That the returns for national positions shall be canvassed first.* Upon completion of the canvass, the board shall prepare the certificate of canvass, of president, vice-president, [and] senator AND PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE, announce the results of the election for national positions in the city and, thereafter, proclaim the elected members of the House of Representatives and city officials.

c) (1) In the Metro Manila Area such municipality/city comprising a legislative district shall have district board of canvassers which shall canvass the ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED election return for President, Vice-Presidents, Senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES, Members for the House of Representatives and elective municipal officials: *Provided, That the return for national positions shall be canvassed first.* Upon completion of the canvass, it shall prepare the certificate of canvass for president, vice-presidents, senators[,] AND PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES, announce the results of the election for national position in the municipality, and thereafter, proclaim the elected member of the House of the Representatives and city officials.

(2) Each component city/municipality in a legislative district in the Metro Manila Area shall have a city/municipal board of canvassers which shall canvass the

ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED election returns for president, vice-president, senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES, members of the House of *Representatives* and elective municipal *officials*: Provided, That *the* returns *for* national positions shall be canvassed first. Upon completion of the canvass, it shall prepare the certificate of canvass for presidents, vice-presidents, senators, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES and members of the House of the Representatives, announce the results of the election for national position in the municipality, and thereafter, proclaim the elected municipal officials.

(3) The district board of canvassers of each legislative district comprising two municipalities in Metro Manila area shall canvass the certificate of canvass for President, Vice-Presidents, Senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES and Members of the House of Representatives submitted by the municipal board of canvassers of the Component municipalities. Upon completion of the canvass, it shall prepare a certificate of canvass for president, vice-president, [and] senator, AND PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE, announce the results of the election for national positions in the district, and thereafter, proclaim the elected member of the House of the Representatives in the legislative district.

(d) The provincial board of canvassers shall canvass the ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED certificate of canvass for president, vice president, senators, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVES, members of the House of Representatives and elective provincial officials as well as plebiscite results, if any plebiscite is conducted simultaneously with the same election, as submitted by the board of canvassers of municipalities and component cities: Provided, That the [returns] CERTIFICATES OF CANVASS for national position shall be canvassed first. Upon completion of the canvass, it shall prepare the certificate of canvass for president, vice-president, [and] senator, PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE announce the results of the election for national position in the province, proclaim the elected member of the House of Representatives and provincial officials as well as the plebiscite results, if any.

In conducting the canvass of election returns or certificates of canvass, as the case may be, the board of canvassers in a municipality, city, district or province shall project each election return or certificate of canvass on a wall from which its contents shall be read in order that those present in the canvassing CENTER may follow the progress of the canvassing process from beginning to end. The Commission may utilize the appropriate projection equipment for this purpose.

Immediately after the certificate of canvass for national positions is accomplished, the chairman of the Board of Canvassers shall announce the posting of the second copy thereof and its supporting statement of votes on a wall *with* sufficient lighting *within* the premises *of the canvassing center*. *He* shall then proceed to do the same in the present in the canvassing center. Without delay and when feasible, he shall capture images of the certificate of canvass and supporting statements of votes using a secured data capturing device and thereafter, while in the premises of the canvassing

center, immediately print the data so captured in thirty (30) copies. The board of canvassers shall then authenticate each printed copy, in the presence of watchers and within public view, by closely comparing the same with the certificate of canvass or statement of votes, as the case may be, posted on of the wall. If the board finds each printed copy a faithful reproduction of the certificate of canvass or statement of votes, all members thereof shall annotate and sign a certification to that effect on the bottom front of the printed copy.

Each certified printed copy shall be placed in an envelope and distributed as herein provided. Designated recipients of the certified printed copies may receive their copies at the canvassing center.

The Chairman of the board shall transmit the digital files WITH DIGITAL ENCRYPTIONS FOR SECURITY REASONS of the certificate of canvass and its supporting statement of votes using a secured transmission device with authentication features to the secured tabulation system of the Commission and to the systems of the other designated recipients as herein provided.

Any provision of law to the contrary notwithstanding, any of the recipients of the print or digital copies of the certificate of canvass and the supporting statements *of votes may* conduct an unofficial consolidation of votes and may announce the result thereof to the public.

Any violation of this section, or its pertinent portion, shall constitute an election offence and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

SEC. 13. Number of Copies of Certificate of Canvass and their Distribution. - a) the certificate of canvass for president, vice-president, senator and member of the house of Representatives and elective provincial official shall be prepared in seven copies by the city or municipal board of canvassers and distributed as follows:

(1) The first copy shall be delivered to the provincial board of canvassers for use in the canvass election results for president, vice-president, senator and member *of the House of Representatives and* elective provincial *officials*:

(2) The second copy shall be sent to the Commission on Elections:

(3) The third copy shall be posted on a wall within the premises of the canvassing center

(4) The fourth copy shall be kept by the chairman of the Board: and

(5) The fifth copy shall be given the citizens' arm designated by the Commission on Elections to conduct a media-based unofficial count, and the sixth and seventh copies shall be given to the citizen's arm designated by the

Commission to conduct a media - based unofficial count , and the sixth and seventh copies shall be given to the representatives of two of the six major political parties in accordance with the voluntary agreement of the parties. If no such agreement is reached, the commission shall decide which parties shall receive the copies of the certificate of the canvass on the basis of the criteria provided in Section 26 hereof. The parties receiving the certificate shall have obligation to furnish the other parties with authentic copies thereof with the at least possible delay.

b) The certificates of canvass for president, vice president, senators shall be prepared in seven (7) copies by the city boards of canvassers of cities comprising one or more legislative districts, by provincial boards of canvassers in the Metro Manila Area, and distributed as follows:

(t) The first copy shall be sent to the Congress directed to the President of the Senate for use in the canvass of election results for president and vice-president;

(2) The second copy shall be sent to the Commission on Elections for use in the canvass of the election results for Senators;

(3) The third copy shall be posted on a wall within the premises of the canvassing center;

(4) The fourth copy shall be kept by the Chairman of the Board; and

(5) The fifth copy shall be given to the citizens' s arm designated by the Commission on Elections to conduct a media -based unofficial count, and the sixth and seventh copies shall be given to the representatives of two of the six major political parties. if no such agreement is reached, the commission shall decide which parties shall receive the copies of the certificate of canvass on the basis of the criteria provided in Section 26 hereof. The parties receiving the certificates shall have the obligation to furnish the other parties with authentic copies thereof with the least possible delay.

The of the certificate of canvass posted on the wall shall be *open for* public viewing at any time of the day for *forty* -eight (48) hours following its posting. Any person may view or capture an image of the certificate of canvass .After the prescribed period for posting, the chairman of the board of canvassers shall collect the posted certificate of canvass and keep the same in his custody to be produced for image or data capturing as may be requested by any voter or for any lawful purpose as may be ordered competent authority.

Except for those copies that are required to be delivered, copies of certificates of canvass may be claimed at the canvassing center. Any unclaimed copy shall be deemed placed in the *custody of the* chairman of

the board of canvassers, who shall produce them requested by the recipient or when ordered by a competent authority.

The thirty (30) certified print copies of the certificate canvass for national positions shall be distributed as follows:

- (a) The first fourteen (14) copies shall be given to the fourteen (14) accredited major national parties in accordance with a voluntary agreement among them. If no such agreement is reached, the commission shall decide which parties shall receive the copies on the basis of the criteria provided in Section 26 hereof;
- (b) The next three copies shall be given to the three accredited major local parties in accordance with a voluntary agreement among them. If no such agreement is reached, the Commission shall decide which parties shall receive the copies in the basis of criteria analogous to the provided in Section 26 hereof;
- (c) The next five copies shall be given to national broadcast or print media entities as may be equitably determined by the Commission on Elections in view of propagating the copies to the widest extent possible;
- (d) The next two copies shall be given to local broadcast or print media entitles as may be equitably determined by the Commission on Elections in view propagating the copies to the widest extent possible;
- (e) The next four copies to the major citizens arms, including accredited citizen` arm, and other non -partisan groups or organizations enlisted by the Commission on Elections pursuant to section 52(K) of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881; and
- (f) The last two copies to be kept in file by the chairman of the board of canvassers to be subsequently distributed as the national board of canvassers may direct.

The certified print copies may be claimed at the canvassing center. Any unclaimed copy shall be deemed place in the custody of the chairman of the board of canvassers, who shall produce them when requested by the recipient or when ordered by a competent authority.

The Commission on Elections shall post its digital files in its website for the public to view or download at any time of the day. The Commission shall maintain the files for at least three years from the date of posting.

Any violation of this section, or its pertinent portion, shall constitute an election offense and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

SEC. 14. Congress as the National Board of Canvassers for the Election of President and Vice President: The Commission en banc as the National Board of Canvassers for the election of senators: Determination of Authenticity and Due Execution of Certificates of Canvass.- Congress and the Commission en banc shall determine the authenticity and due execution of the [certificate of canvass] ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED CERTIFICATES for president and vice - president and senators, respectively, as accomplished and transmitted to it by the local boards of canvassers, on a showing that: (1) each certificate of canvass was executed, signed and thumb marked by the chairman and member of the board of canvassers and transmitted or caused to be transmitted to Congress by them; (2) each certificate of canvass contains the names of all of the candidates for president and vice - president or senator, as the case may be, and their corresponding votes in words and their corresponding votes in words and in figures; (3) there exists no discrepancy in other authentic copies of the document such as statement of votes of any of its supporting document such as statement of votes by city/municipality/by precinct or discrepancy in the votes of any candidate in words and figures in the certificate; and (4) there exist no discrepancy in the votes of any candidate in words and figures in the certificates of canvass against the aggregate number of votes appearing in the election returns of precincts covered by the certificate of canvass: Provided. That certified print copies of election returns or certificates of canvass may be used for the purpose of verifying the existence of the discrepancy.

When the certificate of canvass, duly certified by the board of canvassers of *each* province, *city of* district, appears to be incomplete, the *Senate* President or the Chairman of the Commission, as the case may be, shall require the board of canvassers concerned to transmit by personal delivery, the election returns from polling places that were not included in the certificate of canvass and supporting statements. Said election returns shall be submitted by personal delivery within two (2) days from receipt of notice.

When it appears that any certificate of canvass or supporting statement of votes of each province, city of district, appears to be incomplete, the Senate President or the Chairman of the Commission, as the case may be, shall require the board of canvassers concerned to transmit by personal delivery, the election returns from polling places that were not included in the certificate of canvass and supporting statements. Said election returns shall be submitted by personal delivery within two (2) days from receipt of notice.

When it appears that any certificate of canvass INCLUDING OTHER DULY CERTIFIED PRINTED COPIES THEREOF or supporting statement of votes by city/municipality or by precinct bears erasures or alteration which may cast doubt as to the veracity of the number of votes stated herein and may affect the result of the election, upon requested of the presidential, vice - presidential or senatorial candidate concerned or his party, Congress or the Commission en banc, as the case may be shall, for the sole purpose of verifying the actual the votes as they appear in the copies if the election returns submitted to it.

Any person who present in evidence a simulated copy of an election return, certificate of canvass or statement of votes, or a printed copy of an election return, certificate of canvass or statement of votes bearing a simulated certification or a simulated image, shall be guilty of an election offense shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

SEC. 15. Communication Channels for Electronic Transmissions. ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION WHICH IS DEFINED UNDER R.A. 9369 AS CONVEYING DATA IN ELECTRONIC FORM FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER SHALL BE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING: all electronic transmissions of the election returns, certificates of canvass and other related documents shall utilize secure transmission channels as recommended by the Department of Science and Technology and the National Telecommunications Commission to ensure authentication and integrity of transmission.

The Commission on Elections is hereby authorized to procure the necessary equipment, facilities and services for putting up the electronic transmission system. IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT.

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF THE ELECTION RETURNS AND OTHER SUCH THEREOF AT THE PRECINCT LEVEL SHALL BE FORWARDED TO THE COMELEC OFFICE AND TO THE NATIONAL BROADCAST OR PRINT MEDIA ENTITIES AS MAY BE EQUITABLY BE DETERMINED BY THE COMELEC

SEC. 16. Pre-proclamation controversy. In case of any discrepancy, incompleteness, erasure or alteration as mentioned above, the procedure on pre-proclamation controversies shall be adopted and applied as provided in Sections 17,18, 19 and 20 of Republic Act No. 7166.

SEC. 17. Election Offenses Under this Act. In addition to the violations of the pertinent provisions of this Act, the following shall also constitute election offenses:

- (a) Any Person who removes the election return posted on the wall, whether within or after the prescribed forty-eight (48) hours of posting, or defaces the same in any manner;
- (b) Any person who simulates an actual election return, or a print or digital copy thereof;
- (c) Any person who simulates the certification in a print of an election return;
- (d) The chairman or any member of the board of election inspectors who, during the prescribe period of posting, removes the election return from

the wall on which it had *been* posted other than for the purpose of immediately transferring it to a more suitable place;

- (e) The chairman or any member of the board of election inspectors who signs or authenticates a print of the election return outside of the polling place; and
- (f) The chairman or any member of the board of election inspectors who signs or authenticates a print which bears an image different from the election return produced after counting and posted on the wall.
- (g) Any person who remove the certificate of canvass posted on the wall, whether within or after *the* prescribed forty-eight (48) hours of posting, or defaces the same in any manner;
- (h) Any person who simulates an actual certificates of canvass or statement of votes, or a print or digital copy thereof;
- (i) Any person who simulates the certification of a certificate of canvass or statement of votes;
- (l) The chairman or any member of the board of canvassers who, during the prescribed period of posting, remove the certificate of canvass or its supporting statement of votes from the wall on which they have been posted other than for the purpose of immediately transferring them to a more suitable place;
- (k) The chairman or any member of the board of canvassers who sign or authenticates a print of the certificate of canvass or its supporting statement of votes outside of the polling place; and
- (l) The chairman or any member *of the* board of canvassers who sign or authenticate a print which bears an image different from the certificate of canvass or statement of votes produced after counting and posted on the wall.

SEC. 18. Implementing Rules and Regulations and Bidding. Immediately upon the approval of this Act, the Commission shall formulate such rules and regulations that will effectively implement this Act for purposes of national and local elections. In addition, the Commission on Elections shall prescribe the technical specifications for the electronic devices and computer programs to be used for implementing of this Act, with an aim to ensure fair, honest, and orderly elections and prompt determination of the true results thereof.

SEC. 19. Repealing Clause and Applicability of Other Existing Laws. The provisions of Republic Act No. 8436, as amended by RA 9369, in so far inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby expressly repealed. In

addition, the provisions of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881, as amended, R.A. 7166, and other election laws not inconsistent with this Act shall remain of full force and effect.

SEC. 20. Appropriations. Congress shall provide the necessary appropriation in the general appropriations act to fully implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 21. All laws, decrees, executive orders, resolutions, revenue regulations, ordinances or circulars inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repeated or modified accordingly or declared null and void and inoperative.

SEC. 22. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,