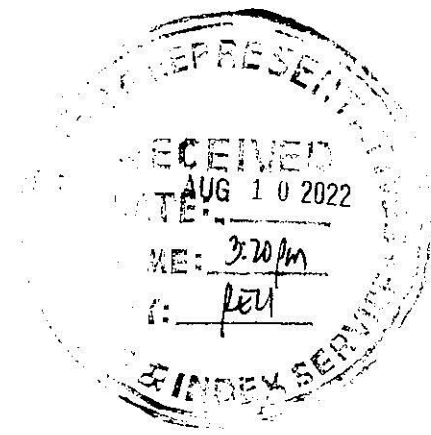


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3474**



Introduced by

Senior Citizens Party-List Representative RODOLFO "OMPONG" M. ORDANES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The importance of a citizen's right to vote is best encapsulated with the universal dictum "salus populi suprema est lex" or "the welfare of the people is the supreme law." This is because one's right to vote is the primary mean by which a country's citizen can directly shape their nation's political future and demand accountability from their chosen leaders. However, even with its great importance, a significant part of our electorate are still constructively prohibited from voting due to the cumbersome voting process they have to undergo to exercise their right to vote.

At present, senior citizens, pregnant women, and PWD, are subjected to the same rigorous and congested electoral process that other able-bodied voters participate in, without any consideration to their unique and special circumstances that renders them highly vulnerable and unable to ordinarily participate in the regular electoral process. In fact, for most of our senior citizens, pregnant women, and PWD, the election's cumbersome and rigorous process has become prohibitive for them when they attempt to exercise their right to vote. Current measures where assistance is given to them on election day proper is almost impossible to execute given the sheer number of voters which our Commission on Elections must accommodate. Thus, given the clear inadequacy of existing measures, new measures must be made to ensure that our senior citizens, pregnant women, and PWD can comfortably exercise their right to vote.

This directive is in line with the mandate of the Constitution which provides that the needs of needs of the underprivileged, sick, **elderly, disabled, women**, and children shall be prioritized. Furthermore, it in line with our culture which champions and prioritizes the welfare of the most vulnerable members of our society.

The proposed measure seeks to fulfill the aforementioned Constitutional mandate by allowing senior citizens, pregnant women, and PWD to avoid the cumbersome and rigorous electoral process in the regular election day by allowing them to vote seven (7) days before the scheduled election day. Through this measure, we ensure that our senior citizens, pregnant women, and PWD can participate in a hassle-free and comfortable elections.

Furthermore, by ensuring a conducive environment for them to vote, we promote a more participative election from all our sectors and enhance political representation in the country, thus, securing a robust Philippine democracy we have all aspired for.

In view of this, passage of the bill is sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RODOLFO M. ORDANES', written over the printed name.

RODOLFO "OMPONG" M. ORDANES

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AN ACT

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of 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 qualified senior citizens and PWDs 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 elections.

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

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

- (a) Keep a record of senior citizens and PWDs who are registered voters;
- (b) Design a registration system, 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 Interior and Local Government, that allows senior citizens and PWDs to register and opt for early voting;

- (c) Ensure that polling places are safe and accessible to senior citizens and PWDs, and properly fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids, as mandated under 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"; and
- (d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting for qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SEC 5. Appropriations. – The initial amount for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the COMELEC. Thereafter, the funding of which 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 early voting for qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SEC. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from its effectivity, the Commission shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

Approved,