

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 681



Introduced by Representative Roman T. Romulo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to vote is not only a privilege—it is a duty. It is the most direct and peaceful means by which the Filipino people express their collective will, choose their leaders, and shape the policies that govern their lives. To exercise suffrage is to take part in the building of a society that reflects our needs, our desires, and our aspirations as a people.

And yet, despite the central role that suffrage plays in our democracy, millions of eligible Filipinos remain unregistered. As of the 2022 National and Local Elections, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) recorded over 65 million registered voters, but it is estimated that 5 to 6 million eligible citizens were unable to vote due to lack of registration. A significant portion of these are young Filipinos who had just turned 18 but did not register—often because of logistical barriers, lack of information, or distance from registration centers.

This bill seeks to close that gap through a pragmatic reform: by allowing voter registration to be offered during ordinary interactions with government agencies. When a Filipino reaches the age of majority and transacts with agencies such as PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, the Land Transportation Office (LTO), the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), or the Social Security System (SSS), they shall be given the opportunity to register as a voter.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) shall coordinate with these agencies to establish secure and lawful procedures, including requirements to verify residency and ensure eligibility. The registration process shall remain voluntary, and all existing safeguards under the Voter's Registration Act and election laws shall be preserved.

This measure does not propose to replace traditional voter registration but rather to enhance it. It recognizes that we already have the infrastructure and moments

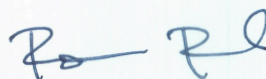
of government contact through which voter registration may be seamlessly offered—particularly to first-time voters.

Importantly, this proposal is also cost-effective. By using the digital systems, personnel, and service processes that are already in place within government agencies, we avoid the need for large new expenditures or programs. Instead, we make smarter use of existing resources to achieve better outcomes in civic participation.

In doing so, this Act intends to foster early civic engagement, especially among the youth, by ensuring that their first interaction with the State as legal adults may also be their first step toward participating in our democracy.

The “First Vote Act” reflects a belief that the State must not only protect the right to vote but actively enable it. Through modest institutional coordination and political will, we can empower more Filipinos to engage in the democratic process.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roman T. Romulo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ROMAN T. ROMULO
Lone District, Pasig City

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AN ACT
**INSTITUTIONALIZING INTEGRATED AND ACCESSIBLE VOTER
REGISTRATION THROUGH INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "**First Vote Act.**"

2 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to recognize the right of
3 all Filipino citizens to vote and to take all appropriate steps to make the exercise of
4 this right accessible, inclusive, and efficient. The State shall promote civic engagement
5 by facilitating voter registration at natural points of interaction between the citizen and
6 the government, especially upon reaching the age of majority.

7 **SEC. 3. Optional Voter Registration Through Government Transactions.** – Any
8 Filipino citizen who is at least eighteen (18) years of age and transacting with a
9 participating government agency shall be offered the option to register as a voter with
10 the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), subject to the provisions of this Act and
11 other applicable election laws.

12 **SEC. 4. Participating Government Agencies.** – The following agencies shall
13 coordinate with the COMELEC to enable optional voter registration for eligible citizens:

- 14 (a) Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth);
15 (b) Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG);
16 (c) Land Transportation Office (LTO);
17 (d) Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA);
18 (e) Social Security System (SSS);
19 (f) Government Service Insurance System (GSIS);
20 (g) Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);

- 1 (h) Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- 2 (i) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and
- 3 (j) Such other agencies as may hereafter be designated by the COMELEC, in
- 4 consultation with concerned government offices, through rules and regulations.

5 **SEC. 5. COMELEC Authority and Responsibilities.** – The COMELEC shall:

- 6 (a) Establish systems and protocols for secure and verifiable voter registration in
- 7 coordination with participating agencies;
- 8 (b) Require such additional documents or information as may be necessary to
- 9 verify identity and residence;
- 10 (c) Ensure that registrations obtained through inter-agency coordination conform
- 11 to the requirements of the Voter's Registration Act (Republic Act No. 8189) and
- 12 other applicable laws;
- 13 (d) Conduct periodic training and capacity-building for personnel of participating
- 14 agencies to assist in the implementation of this Act;
- 15 (e) Develop public education campaigns in cooperation with participating agencies
- 16 to inform citizens of their right and opportunity to register; and
- 17 (f) Submit an annual report to Congress on the implementation of this Act,
- 18 including data on registrants enrolled through inter-agency coordination and
- 19 any recommendations for policy or administrative improvements.

20 **SEC. 6. Voluntary Nature of Registration.** – Registration under this Act shall be

21 voluntary. No eligible person shall be compelled to register as a condition for obtaining

22 any government service or benefit.

23 **SEC. 7. Data Privacy and Consent.** – All personal data collected and processed

24 under this Act shall be handled in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, or the

25 "Data Privacy Act of 2012." The citizen's express, written or digital consent shall be

26 required prior to the transfer of any personal information from a participating agency

27 to the COMELEC for the purpose of registration.

28 **SEC. 8. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this

29 Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the COMELEC and

30 participating agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued

31 implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

32 **SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from the

33 effectivity of this Act, the COMELEC, in consultation with the Department of

34 Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the National Privacy

35 Commission (NPC), and other relevant agencies, including but not limited to the

36 Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Civil Service

37 Commission (CSC), and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA),

38 shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

- 1 **SEC. 10. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is declared
2 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of the Act shall not be affected thereby.
- 3 **SEC. 11. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and
4 regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
5 repealed or modified accordingly.
- 6 **SEC. 12. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
7 in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,