

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1524



Introduced by: Hon. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED LAWYERS IN NATIONAL AND
LOCAL ELECTIONS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

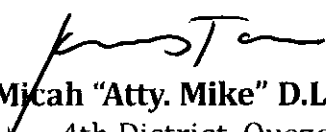
Article V, Section 1 of the Philippine Constitutions provides that, "Suffrage may be exercised by all citizens of the Philippines not otherwise disqualified by law, who are at least eighteen years of age, and who shall have resided in the Philippines for at least one year and in the place wherein they propose to vote for at least six months immediately preceding the election. No literacy, property, or other substantive requirement shall be imposed on the exercise of suffrage."

The right to suffrage is the essence of our democracy. As a means to increase participation by citizens who are otherwise prevented from voting, the country has enacted absentee voting laws. Presently, there are laws that allow absentee voting for Filipinos overseas, media practitioners, armed forces and police force. However, these still leave another group disenfranchised due to the performance of their function during elections.

Lawyers are officers of the court and serve as guardians of truth and the rule of law, and indispensable instruments in the fair and impartial administration of justice. It is their duty to ensure that justice prevails and the law is observed. As such, lawyers are called out during the elections to monitor the conduct of elections and most are stationed away from their residences because of this. By ensuring they have sufficient opportunity to vote, we help guarantee that legal professionals—who are often deeply engaged in the legal and political framework of the country—can participate in choosing leaders and policies that impact the legal system and governance.

Hence, this bill provides for means for lawyers stationed away from their residences on election days to vote on national elections in the precincts nearest to them subject to reasonable regulations by the Commission on Election.

In view thereof, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan
4th District, Quezon

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the 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 lawyers by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the elections.

SEC. 2. *Early Voting.* - For national and local elections, there shall be early voting where qualified lawyers 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 lawyers 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 lawyers who are registered voters;
- (b) Design a registration system, in coordination with local government units, the Office of the Bar Confidant of the Supreme Court, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and the Department of Interior and Local Government, that allows lawyers to register and opt for early voting;
- (c) Ensure that polling places are safe and accessible to lawyers; and
- (d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting for lawyers.

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 Big. 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.

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.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SEC 9. *Repealing Clause.* - All other laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, presidential proclamations, rules and regulations or parts thereof, which are contrary to and inconsistent with any provision 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 a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,