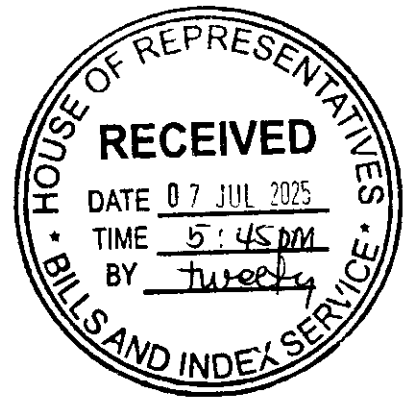


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1525



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

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH
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."

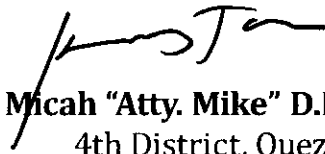
The right to suffrage is the essence of our democracy. As a means to increase participation by citizens who are otherwise prevented from voting, the country has enacted absentee voting laws. Presently, there are laws that allow absentee voting for Filipinos overseas, media practitioners, armed forces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

Human resources for health (HRHs) or those who are engaged in health and health-related work play a significant role in society by promoting health and preventing and curing disease. As such, it is important to ensure that their voices will be heard and their votes will be counted during elections. However, some of them may not be able to vote as they are stationed away from their residences on election days to deliver essential health services, attend to medical emergencies, and save lives. Qualified HRHs—such as doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals—should be allowed to vote early during elections because of the nature of their work. Their schedules are often demanding, unpredictable, and include long shifts, night duties, or emergency calls, which may fall on election day. Early voting gives them the flexibility to cast their votes without conflicting with their responsibilities to patients, especially during times when their presence in hospitals and clinics is critical.

Allowing early voting also helps ensure that these professionals, who play a vital role in national well-being, are not disenfranchised due to their commitment to public service. Giving them the opportunity to vote early recognizes their sacrifices and supports their right to participate in shaping the policies and leaders that directly impact the healthcare sector and the public they serve.

Hence, this bill provides for means for HRHs 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Tan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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 human resources for health (HRHs) 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 HRHs 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. For purposes of this Act, HRHs refer to all persons who are engaged in health and health-related work, and all persons employed in all hospitals, sanitarium, health infirmaries, health centers, rural health units, barangay health stations, clinics and other health-related establishments owned and operated by the Government or its political subdivisions with original charters and shall include medical, allied health professional, administrative and support personnel employed regardless of their employment status who physically report to the frontlines during the day of the election.

SEC. 3. *Registration.* - There shall be a nationwide registration for HRHs 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 HRHs who are registered voters;
- (b) Design a registration system, in coordination with local government units, the Department of Health, and the Department of Interior and Local Government, that allows HRHs to register and opt for early voting;
- (c) Ensure that polling places are safe and accessible to HRHs; and
- (d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting for HRHs.

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,