



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



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2293

Introduced by **Representative MA. VICTORIA CO-PILAR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to vote is a cornerstone of democracy, and the State must ensure that this right is accessible to all Filipinos, including the millions living and working abroad. Republic Act No. 9189, or the Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003, as amended by RA No. 10590, marked a significant milestone in enabling overseas Filipinos to participate in national elections. However, in practice, the process of overseas voting and registration remains hampered by logistical limitations, costly procedures, and low turnout due to the inaccessibility of registration centers and voting posts.

The primary problem addressed by this bill is the barrier to participation in overseas elections, caused by physical distance from embassies or consular posts, long travel times, lack of access to mobile registration, and risks posed during public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges have led to consistently low overseas voter turnout, despite a significant number of registered Filipinos abroad.

The Overseas Electronic Registration and Voting Act addresses the urgent need to modernize overseas electoral participation by introducing inclusive, secure, and technology-driven alternatives. It upholds the constitutional promise that every Filipino voice matters – no matter where in the world they may be.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.

Philippines [approved by the Commission], **BY MAIL, OR BY ELECTRONIC MEANS AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, IN TIMES OF PUBLIC CRISIS, THE COMMISSION IS AUTHORIZED TO SUSPEND REGISTRATION IN PERSON TO PRIORITIZE SAFE ALTERNATIVE METHODS.**

Field and mobile registration centers shall be set up by the posts concerned to ensure accessibility.

[All applicants shall submit themselves for live capture of their biometrics.] **THE COMMISSION, THROUGH THE OFOV, IN COORDINATION WITH THE DFA, DMW, MARINA, PSA, AND OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES SHALL OBTAIN BIOMETRIC DATA OF QUALIFIED OVERSEAS VOTERS: PROVIDED, THAT PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA SHALL COMPLY WITH R.A. NO. 10173 (DATA PRIVACY ACT OF 2012), ITS IRR, AND ISSUANCES OF THE NATIONAL PRIVACY COMMISSION.**

The Commission shall issue an overseas voter ID card to those whose applications to vote – **EITHER IN PERSON, BY MAIL, OR BY ELECTRONIC MEANS AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION,** have been approved.”

SEC. 4. Section 10 of the same Act, as amended, is hereby further amended to read:

“SEC. 10. Transfer of Registration Record. – In the event of change of voting venue, an application for transfer must be filed with the OFOV, through its Chairperson, **EITHER IN PERSON, BY MAIL, OR BY ELECTRONIC MEANS AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION,** at least 180 days prior to the start of the voting period. *Provided,* That those who intend to vote in the Philippines should register within the period for local registration in their municipality, city, or district. *Provided further,* That those who have registered in the municipality, city, or district where they resided prior to their departure abroad need not register anew: *Provided, finally,* That transferees must notify the OFOV of their return to the Philippines at least 180 days before the next national elections for purposes of cancellation and removal from the book of voters.”

SEC. 5. Section 13 is amended to read:

“SEC. 13. National Registry of Overseas Voters (NROV). – The Commission shall maintain a NROV containing the names of registered overseas voters and the posts where they are registered: **PROVIDED, THAT THE COMMISSION SHALL INSTITUTE SAFEGUARDS TO PROTECT THE DATA PRIVACY RIGHTS OF OVERSEAS VOTERS.**”

SEC. 6. Section 23 is amended to read:

“SEC. 23. Voting. – Voting may be done personally, by mail, or by any [other] **ELECTRONIC** means as may be determined by the Commission. For this purpose, the Commission shall issue the necessary guidelines on the manner and procedures of voting **AT LEAST 120 DAYS PRIOR TO THE CONDUCT OF THE NEXT NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS.**”

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2 SEC. 7. Section 17 is amended to read:

3 "SEC. 17. Voting by Mail or by Electronic Means.

4 17.1. [For the May, 2024 elections] [t]The Commission shall authorize voting
5 [in not more than three (3) countries, subject to the approval of the
6 Congressional Oversight Committee] **OR BY MAIL OR BY ELECTRONIC**
7 **MEANS IN ALL POSTS ABROAD.** Voting by mail may be allowed in
8 countries that satisfy the following conditions:

9 (a) x x x

10 (b) x x x

11 (c) x x x

12 **ELECTRONIC VOTING MAY BE ALLOWED IN COUNTRIES AS**
13 **DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION.**

14 [Thereafter, voting by mail in any country shall be allowed only upon review
15 and approval of the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.]

16 17.2. x x x

17 17.3. Only [mailed] ballots **TRANSMITTED BY MAIL OR BY ELECTRONIC**
18 **MEANS AND** received before the close of voting on the day of elections shall
19 be counted in accordance with Section 27 hereof. All envelopes containing the
20 ballots received by the posts after the prescribed period shall not be opened,
21 and shall be cancelled and disposed of appropriately, with a corresponding
22 report thereon submitted to the Commission not later than thirty (30) days from
23 the day of elections."
24

25 SEC. 8. Section 32 is amended to read:

26 "SEC. 32. Information Campaign. – The Commission, in coordination with
27 relevant agencies, shall undertake an information campaign to educate the
28 public on the manner of overseas voting for qualified overseas voters. It may
29 require the support of and assistance of the DFA, through the posts, [the
30 DOLE, the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC)], **THE**
31 **DMW, THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND**
32 **COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT), THE NATIONAL**
33 **PRIVACY COMMISSION (NPC), THE MARINA, THE PHILIPPIINE**
34 **POSTAL CORPOATION (PPC), [the POEA] OWWA, and the Commission on**
35 **Filipinos Overseas."**

36 SEC. 9. Section 34 is amended to read:

37 "SEC. 34. Assistance from Government Agencies. – All government officers,
38 particularly from the DFA, [the DOLE, the DOTC] **THE DMW, THE DICT,**
39 **THE NPC, THE MARINA, PPC, [the POEA] the OWWA, the Commission on**
40 **Filipinos Overseas and other government offices concerned with the welfare**
41 **of Filipinos overseas shall, to the extent compatible with their primary**
42 **responsibilities, assist the Commission in carrying out the provisions of this**
43 **Act. All such agencies or officers thereof shall take reasonable measures to**
44 **expedite all election activities which the Commission may send supervisory**
45 **teams headed by career officers to assist the posts.**

1 x x x"

2

3 **SEC. 10.** Section 36 is amended to read:

4 "SEC. 36. Prohibited Acts. – In addition to other prohibited acts provided by

5 law, it shall be unlawful:

6 36.1. x x x

7 x x x

8 36.3. It shall be unlawful to steal, alter, destroy, or tamper with mail or

9 **ELECTRONIC DATA OR INFORMATION** containing the ballots for

10 overseas voters, the ballot, the election returns, or any record, document or

11 paper required for the purposes of this Act;

12 x x x

13 36.7. x x x

14 36.8. [For any person to engage in partisan political activity abroad during the

15 thirty (30)- day overseas voting period;]

16 [36.9.] For any person who is not a citizen of the Philippines to participate, by

17 word or deed, directly or indirectly through qualified

18 organizations/associations, in any manner at any stage of the Philippine

19 political process abroad, including participation in the campaign or elections.

20 x x x."

21 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall

22 be included in the respective budgets of the agencies concerned on the annual General

23 Appropriations Act.

24

25 **SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** The Commission shall promulgate rules

26 within 60 days from effectivity, in coordination with DFA, DOLE, DMW, OWWA, DICT,

27 MARINA, PSA, CFO, and relevant groups.

28

29 **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** If any provision is declared invalid, the rest shall remain

30 in effect.

31

32 **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** All laws and issuances inconsistent with this Act are repealed

33 or modified accordingly.

34

35 **SEC. 15. Effectivity Clause.** This Act shall take effect 15 days after publication in the

36 Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

37

38 Approved,