

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

TWENTIETH (20th) CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House Bill No. **2735**



Introduced by
Rep. ROBERT NAZAL

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FILING OF CERTIFICATES OF
CANDIDACY, AMENDING SECTION 76 OF BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 881,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE OMNIBUS ELECTION CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Filipino voters deserve a ballot that lists only those aspirants who have proved their basic eligibility to serve. During the May 2022 national and local elections, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) received 47,853 Certificates of Candidacy (COCs) for 18,100 positions - a volume the agency itself admitted was unusually heavy and difficult to police. Of the 97 people who filed for the presidency, COMELEC had to initiate nuisance-candidate cases against eighty-two; parallel actions followed for fifteen of twenty-nine vice-presidential and 108 of 176 senatorial hopefuls. Each deficient filing drains staff time, clogs dockets and can distort representation: in 2023 the Supreme Court nullified a congressional proclamation in Zamboanga del Norte after votes of a nuisance candidate were wrongly credited to another contender, reminding all that the true winner must be proclaimed without delay.

COMELEC Chair George Erwin M. Garcia has publicly asked Congress for authority to refuse COCs that lack an authenticated birth certificate or equivalent proof, noting that the poll body's present duty is "purely ministerial" and that it must accept any COC whose blanks are merely filled in. The proposed amendment to Section 76 of the Omnibus Election Code provides that authority. It requires a Philippine Statistics Authority-issued birth certificate (or judicial substitute) and other primary documents, empowers election officers to refuse incomplete filings outright, and affords a uniform five-day window for candidates to cure deficiencies. The measure also directs COMELEC to create, within three years, a secure online filing portal that can cross-check uploads against government databases, and it sets criminal penalties for falsified papers as well as administrative sanctions for negligent personnel.

Four immediate gains follow. First, early screening prevents thousands of hours of litigation, allowing COMELEC lawyers and the courts to focus on genuine electoral disputes. Second, voters are protected from confusion and from ballots crowded with names that can never assume office. Third, accountability improves, because fraudulent filers and delinquent officials face real consequences. Finally, the reform aligns election administration with the national e-Governance agenda, ensuring that COC vetting keeps pace with digital civil-registry systems.

Requiring every would-be public servant, famous or unknown, to back a COC with authentic documents honors both ideals: it safeguards the people's sovereign choice and models the transparency the next generation is urged to uphold. The Enhanced COC Documentary Requirements Act of 2025 is therefore a modest but decisive step toward elections that are cleaner, quicker, and fully worthy of the democratic aspirations enshrined in the Constitution.

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



Rep. ROBERT NAZAL
Bagong Henerasyon Party-List

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act shall be known as the “Enhanced COC Documentary Requirements Act of 2025.”

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY.

It is hereby declared the policy of the State to safeguard the integrity, credibility, and efficiency of the electoral process by strengthening the standards and documentation required for the filing of Certificates of Candidacy (COC). The State recognizes that elections are the foundation of democratic governance and shall ensure that only those who are constitutionally qualified, compliant with applicable laws, and capable of faithfully executing the duties of public office may validly run for election.

To this end, the State shall require all candidates to demonstrate minimum eligibility through verifiable documentation, thereby reducing the incidence of nuisance candidates, disqualification cases, and administrative burdens on electoral bodies. This policy shall likewise promote the efficient adjudication of electoral contests and uphold the sovereign right of the people to informed political choice.

SECTION 3. OBJECTIVES.

This Act seeks to reinforce the legitimacy and integrity of the electoral process by establishing stricter requirements and administrative protocols for the filing of Certificates of Candidacy (COCs). Specifically, it shall:

- A. Require the submission of primary, duly authenticated documentary evidence proving a candidate's eligibility, including but not limited to proofs of citizenship, age, residency, voter registration, educational attainment (where applicable), and other qualifications prescribed by the Constitution and relevant statutes, at the time of filing the COC;
- B. Authorize the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to summarily reject, without prejudice, any Certificate of Candidacy that is incomplete, unverified, or not compliant with the documentary requirements prescribed under this Act or its implementing rules and regulations;
- C. Establish time-bound procedures governing the submission of supplemental documents, the rectification of clerical or formal defects, and the appeal of adverse decisions made by the Commission, ensuring that due process is observed within the constraints of the electoral calendar;
- D. Prescribe administrative, civil, and criminal sanctions against candidates or persons who knowingly submit false, spurious, or tampered documents, or who willfully omit material facts in order to mislead the Commission or gain undue advantage in the electoral process; and
- E. Enhance the transparency, credibility, and efficiency of candidate vetting by empowering COMELEC to coordinate with relevant government agencies such as the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Immigration (BI), and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for the verification and cross-referencing of submitted records.

SECTION 4. AMENDMENT OF SECTION 76, OMNIBUS ELECTION CODE

Section 76 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881 is hereby amended to read as follows:

~~"Section 76. [Ministerial duty of receiving and acknowledging receipt. – The Commission, provincial election supervisor, election registrar or officer designated by the Commission or the board of election inspectors under the succeeding section shall have the ministerial duty to receive and acknowledge receipt of the certificate of candidacy.]~~

CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDACY. – THE CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDACY SHALL BE FILED WITH THE FOLLOWING MANDATORY ATTACHMENTS:

- (A) FOR ALL ELECTIVE POSITIONS, AN AUTHENTICATED COPY OF THE CANDIDATE’S BIRTH CERTIFICATE OR, IN ITS ABSENCE, A JUDICIALLY RECOGNIZED SUBSTITUTE DOCUMENT;**
- (B) FOR NATURALIZED FILIPINO CITIZENS, A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY OF THE DECREE OF NATURALIZATION AND VALID PHILIPPINE PASSPORT;**
- (C) FOR CANDIDATES CLAIMING RESIDENCY OUTSIDE THEIR PLACE OF BIRTH, A SWORN RESIDENCY AFFIDAVIT SUPPORTED BY AT LEAST TWO VERIFIABLE PROOFS OF RESIDENCE;**
- (D) FOR ELECTIVE BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN POSITIONS, A CERTIFICATE OF GOOD MORAL CHARACTER ISSUED BY THE BARANGAY OF RESIDENCE; AND**
- (E) SUCH OTHER DOCUMENTS AS MAY BE PRESCRIBED BY THE COMMISSION IN ITS IMPLEMENTING RULES.**

NO CERTIFICATE OF CANDIDACY SHALL BE ACCEPTED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY ALL APPLICABLE ATTACHMENTS. THE COMMISSION SHALL ISSUE IMMEDIATELY A WRITTEN REFUSAL OF ACCEPTANCE INDICATING THE DEFICIENCIES, A COPY OF WHICH SHALL BE MADE PART OF THE PUBLIC RECORD.

A CANDIDATE WHOSE COC HAS BEEN REFUSED MAY CURE THE DEFICIENCY WITHIN FIVE (5) CALENDAR DAYS FROM RECEIPT OF THE REFUSAL; OTHERWISE, NO FURTHER FILING SHALL BE ALLOWED, AND THE INDIVIDUAL SHALL BE DEEMED NOT A CANDIDATE FOR ALL LEGAL PURPOSES.

ACCEPTANCE OF A FACIALLY COMPLETE COC SHALL BE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO SUBSEQUENT PETITIONS UNDER SECTION 78.”

SECTION 5. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE.

If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 6. REPEALING CLAUSE.

All laws, executive orders, proclamations, rules, regulations, and other issuances or parts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVITY.

This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,