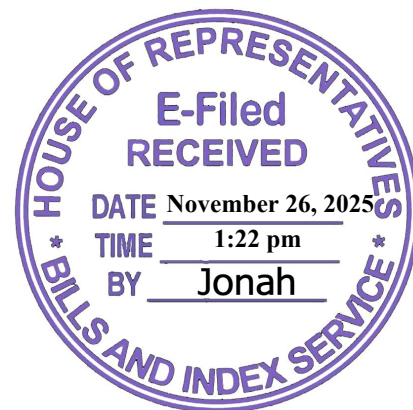


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6411



Introduced by Lone District of Agusan del Norte Representative
HON. DALE B. CORVERA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS,
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, LAWYERS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES
FOR HEALTH IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to vote is a cornerstone of democracy, enshrined in Article V, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which guarantees that suffrage shall be exercised by all citizens of the Philippines not otherwise disqualified by law. The State, therefore, bears the duty to ensure that this right is meaningful, accessible, and safe for all qualified voters—especially those whose age, health, or professional responsibilities make it difficult to cast their ballots on election day.

Over the years, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) has taken steps to make elections more inclusive, notably through Republic Act No. 10366, which established accessible polling places for senior citizens and persons with disability (PWDs). Yet the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, recurring public health emergencies, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events have shown that many voters continue to face physical and logistical barriers. Elderly Filipinos, PWDs, healthcare workers, and essential service providers remain among the most affected—often finding themselves unable to safely or feasibly participate on election day.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the country's senior citizen population has grown to 10.8 million Filipinos aged 60 and above as of the 2020 Census, representing roughly 10 percent of the national population.¹ Many among them live with chronic illnesses, functional difficulties, or mobility limitations that make long queues and congested polling centers unsafe or inaccessible.

For persons with disabilities, the PSA's 2020 Census on Functional Difficulty reports that approximately 8.47 million Filipinos aged five years and older experience at least one functional difficulty—an internationally aligned measure of disability used by official statistical systems.² Meanwhile, administrative records from the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) show that as of June 2024, there are 1,638,588 registered persons with

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH): Highlights of the Philippine Population. Released July 2022. Senior citizens (aged 60+) recorded at approximately 10.8 million based on household population counts.

² Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Functional Difficulty in the Philippines: Household Population Aged 5 Years and Over (2020 Census of Population and Housing). Released August 2023. Total individuals reporting at least one functional difficulty: 8,465,057.

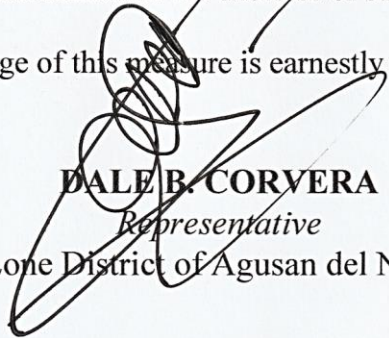
disabilities in the Philippine Registry of Persons with Disability (PRPWD).³ Despite these significant numbers, multiple studies and civil society assessments indicate that voter turnout among PWDs remains consistently lower than the national average due to long queues, inaccessible voting centers, difficulty with mobility or communication, and insufficient accommodation.⁴

Equally important are lawyers and human resources for health (HRH)—physicians, nurses, medical technologists, hospital personnel, community health workers and other allied professionals—who are often required to remain on duty during elections to provide lifesaving services and emergency response. During the 2022 National and Local Elections, thousands of health personnel and legal practitioners were unable to vote because of duty schedules, deployment orders, and public safety operations.⁵ Ensuring that they have the opportunity to vote in advance acknowledges both their civic rights and their indispensable service to the nation.

This bill institutionalizes early voting for qualified senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers and HRH, thus strengthening participatory governance while safeguarding public welfare. It mandates the COMELEC to develop an integrated registration and early voting system in coordination with relevant agencies, and to ensure that designated polling centers are fully accessible and equipped. The proposal also complements the Commission's ongoing modernization initiatives under the Automated Election System Law, the Omnibus Election Code and Republic Act No. 7166, which encourage reforms that enhance voter participation and electoral integrity.⁶

As technology enables more flexible electoral systems and as climate-related and public health disruptions become more frequent, the need for resilient and inclusive voting mechanisms grows increasingly urgent. This measure ensures that no Filipino—whether by reason of age, disability, or service to the public—is left behind in the exercise of suffrage.

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


DALE B. CORVERA
Representative
Lone District of Agusan del Norte

³ National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA). Philippine Registry of Persons with Disabilities (PRPWD): Summary Statistics, as of June 8, 2024. Cited in UNICEF Philippines (2024), Promoting Inclusive Disability Registration in the Philippines.

⁴ Ateneo School of Government (ASoG). Democratic Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines: Policy Gaps and Accessibility Issues. 2021; COMELEC Accessibility Audits and Reports, various election cycles (2016–2022).

⁵ Department of Health (DOH). Health Emergency and Duty Deployment Reports, 2022 National and Local Elections; Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). Election Duty and Legal Assistance Summary, 2022 Elections.

⁶ Commission on Elections (COMELEC). Automated Election System (AES) 2025 Roadmap; relevant modernization provisions under the Omnibus Election Code and Republic Act No. 7166.

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AN ACT
**PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS,
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FOR HEALTH IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS**

Be it enacted by the Senate and 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 senior citizens, persons with disability (PWDs), lawyers, and human resources for health by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the elections.

SEC. 2. Early Voting. – In consideration of their respective physical and health conditions, senior citizens and PWDs shall be allowed to vote early in national and local elections. Similarly, in consideration of the necessity of providing professional services and ensuring the health and safety of the populace during election day, lawyers and human resources for health, respectively, shall be allowed to vote early in national and local elections.

For the purposes of this Act, the term “human resources for health” shall refer to those who are engaged in health and health-related work, and all persons employed in all hospitals, sanatoria, 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 senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health 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 Commission on Elections. – To ensure the effective implementation of this Act, the Commission on Elections shall:

- (a) Keep a record of senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health who are registered voters;
- (b) Design a registration system, in coordination with local government units, the National Council on Disability Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the Bar Confidant of the Supreme Court, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Department of Health, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government for senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health in order to facilitate their early voting;
- (c) Ensure that polling places are safe and accessible to senior citizens and PWDs, and properly fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids, as mandated under Republic Act No. 10366 entitled, “An Act Authorizing the Commission on Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens”; and
- (d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting for qualified senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health.

SEC. 5. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the COMELEC. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. Applicability of Other Laws. – The provisions of Batas Pambansa Blg. 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, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health.

SEC. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from its effectivity, the Commission shall promulgate rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 8. Separability. – 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. – 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,