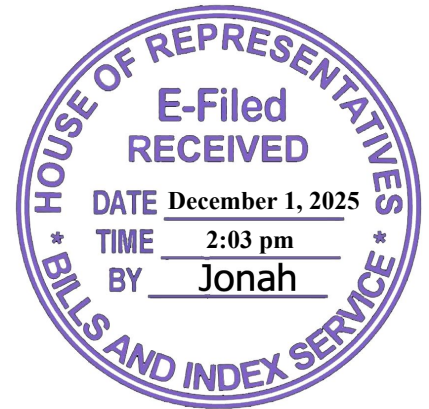


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6488



Introduced by:

HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution guarantees suffrage and mandates the State to ensure clean, honest, orderly, and credible elections. Yet many Filipinos still face practical barriers to voting on a single election day, particularly senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), front line health workers, and lawyers who often perform essential duties during elections. Congress has already recognized the special needs of PWDs and senior citizens through Republic Act No. 10366, which authorizes the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to establish accessible polling places to ensure that these groups can register and vote without discrimination.

Building on this policy, the bill establishes an early voting mechanism held before the regular election day for senior citizens, PWDs, lawyers engaged in custodial or legal assistance roles, and human resources for health, including doctors, nurses, midwives, medical technologists, ambulance and emergency responders, and other vital health personnel. These sectors face recurring and predictable obstacles to same day in person voting because of mobility limitations, public service responsibilities, or duties essential to maintaining order and public welfare on election day.

The Supreme Court has affirmed that reasonable and neutral administrative regulations such as registration and biometrics validation do not impose unconstitutional qualifications on suffrage but are procedural measures that protect electoral integrity. Early voting fits within this principle: it is a calendar and logistical adjustment that expands access without altering voter qualifications, the secrecy of the ballot, or the manner of counting votes. It simply allows designated voters to cast the same official ballot at an earlier, controlled time.

The bill provides a narrowly tailored early voting window with clear safeguards. Eligibility is strictly limited to registered voters within the identified sectors, verified by COMELEC. Ballots, counting, and canvassing follow the same procedures as regular voting, supported by transparency and chain of custody measures. COMELEC is authorized to designate secure early voting centers, adopt assistive technologies, and issue rules to prevent double voting and preserve ballot secrecy. These safeguards ensure that expanded access does not compromise electoral integrity.

International experience shows that early voting increases turnout among seniors, voters with mobility or health challenges, and essential personnel with unpredictable schedules. In the Philippine context, it would reduce congestion in polling places, lessen the burden on PWDs and senior citizens, and allow health workers and lawyers to perform critical public duties on election day without sacrificing their right to vote. Because RA 10366 already embraces the principle of reasonable accommodation, this proposed early voting framework is a logical extension of existing law and extends similar support to other sectors whose election day obligations are indispensable to public order and welfare.

In the Nineteenth Congress, the House of Representatives approved a similar measure on Third Reading as House Bill No. 7576 on May 8, 2023.

In view of the foregoing, **ug sa ngalan sa SERBISYONG TINUORAY**, the undersigned respectfully requests the immediate passage of this measure.


CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP
Representative, Second District of Southern Leyte

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HON. CHRISTOPHERSON “COCO” M. YAP

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, LAWYERS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES 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 disabilities (PWDs), lawyers, and human resources for health by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the elections.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 3. Registration. — There shall be 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.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 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 citizen, PWDs, lawyers, and human resources for health.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 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,