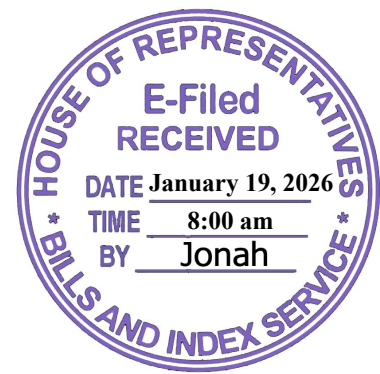


TWENTIETH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.*

House Bill No. 7131

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Many countries have compulsory voting. One of the main reasons why compulsory voting is present is that a system with higher turnout helps make the electorate more representative and voter suppression more difficult. Some examples include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, and Singapore.

Argentina introduced compulsory voting in 1912 with the Sáenz Peña Law. Registered voters who abstain from voting without a verified justification in Argentina are liable to pay a fine and in case of non-payment, the person concerned is barred from dealing with public bodies for one year. Voter turnout reached as high as 85%.

Australia also has compulsory voting which was introduced in some of their states as early as 1915. Australia has one of the highest electoral turnout rates in the world, which has never fallen below 90% since 1924.

Brazil also has compulsory voting since 1932. Those who do not vote in an election and do not later present an acceptable justification are subject to a fine. And proof of voting compliance is required for some transactions such as obtaining a Brazilian passport, admission to a public university, government employment, and loans from a government-owned bank.

Singapore's law provides that failure to vote may result in the removal of one's name from the electoral roll. A non-voter can restore one's name to the register by submitting an application to the Registration Officer with a valid excuse as to why they did not vote in the most recent election. Those who do not vote, without a valid excuse, are subject to a fine before they are restored on electoral roll.

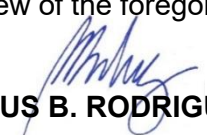
The 1987 Constitution declares that sovereignty resides in the people and that all government authority emanates from them (Article II, Section 1). Suffrage is guaranteed as a fundamental right of every qualified citizen (Article V, Section 1), serving as the primary means by which the people exercise this sovereignty.

Despite this constitutional guarantee, voter turnout in the Philippines remains inconsistent, with significant portions of the electorate failing to participate in elections. This undermines the representative character of democratic institutions and weakens the popular mandate of elected officials.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize compulsory voting as a means to strengthen democratic participation, enhance the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, and ensure broader representation of the electorate. By recognizing voting not only as a right but also as a civic duty, the State affirms its constitutional obligation to promote a responsive and accountable government.

The bill provides for reasonable exemptions and proportionate penalties, consistent with due process and the constitutional protection of individual liberties. Compulsory voting is not intended to restrict freedom of choice but to ensure inclusive participation in the democratic process.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly requested.


RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ


MAXIMO B. RODRIGUEZ, JR.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez and
Representative Maximo B. Rodriguez, Jr.*

House Bill No. 7131

AN ACT

**MANDATING COMPULSORY VOTING IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS,
PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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 “Compulsory Voting Act”.

SEC 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to strengthen democratic participation, promote civic responsibility, and ensure that the will of the people is fully and fairly reflected in the outcome of elections. The State recognizes voting as both a right and a civic duty essential to representative democracy and good governance.

SEC 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:

- a. Compulsory Voting refers to the legal obligation of qualified voters to appear and cast a ballot in an election.
- b. Qualified Voter refers to a citizen of the Philippines who is duly registered under existing election laws.
- c. Election refers to national and local elections, including regular and special elections, as may be applicable.
- d. Valid Excuse refers to circumstances recognized under this Act that justify failure to vote.

SEC 4. Compulsory Voting. – All qualified voters shall be required to vote in all national and local elections in which they are registered.

SEC 5. Exemptions. – The following shall be exempt from compulsory voting upon submission of appropriate proof or justification to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC):

- a. Persons aged sixty-five (65) years and above;
- b. Persons with disabilities or serious illness that prevent them from voting;
- c. Voters who are outside their place of registration due to work, study, or other unavoidable circumstances;
- d. Members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, or other government personnel on official duty on election day;
- e. Voters affected by natural disasters, emergencies, or other force majeure events; and
- f. Such other valid and reasonable grounds as may be determined by the COMELEC.

SEC 6. Penalties for Failure to Vote Without Valid Excuse. –

- a. First Offense – A fine of One thousand pesos (₱1,000.00)
- b. Second Offense – A fine of Two thousand pesos (₱2,000.00).

- c. Third and Succeeding Offenses – A fine of Five thousand pesos (P5,000.00) and mandatory attendance in a voter education program.

Failure to pay the prescribed fine without valid cause may result in temporary disqualification from appointment to public office or from availing certain government-issued clearances, subject to due process.

SEC 7. Administration and Enforcement. – The COMELEC shall be the primary agency responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this Act. It shall:

- a. Establish a system to monitor voter compliance;
- b. Determine and evaluate valid excuses for failure to vote;
- c. Administer the collection of fines and the implementation of alternative penalties; and
- d. Conduct nationwide voter education and information campaigns regarding compulsory voting.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the COMELEC, in coordination with relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC 9. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC 10. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC 11. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,