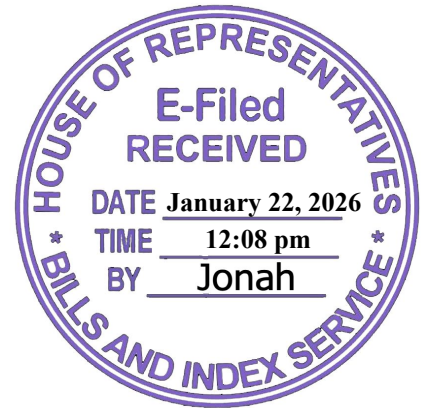




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH (20TH) CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7237



Introduced by Representative **FELIMON M. ESPARES**

**AN ACT TO ENSURE THAT THE PARTY-LIST SYSTEM IS RESERVED
FOR THE MARGINALIZED AND UNDERREPRESENTED AMENDING
FOR THAT PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7941, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE "*PARTY-LIST SYSTEM ACT*"**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 1995, Republic Act No. 7941, or the *Party-list System Act*, was enacted with the noble intention of giving marginalized and underrepresented sectors a forum to address their needs and concerns through legislation and in turn, institutionalized reforms. It was meant to ensure that those on the fringes—such as farmers, laborers, women, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities—had a platform to represent their needs and aspirations.¹

However, these marginalized sectors remain excluded as they lack the resources to meet the legal, organizational, and financial requirements needed to register and compete with other party-lists with a more established machinery. Thus, rather than advocating for laws that would directly benefit these communities, party-lists are now often controlled by political families and allies. This does not only perpetuate inequality, but it also undermines the very foundation of democratic representation.

Consequently, in order to restore the original intent and spirit of the party-list system and to ensure that it benefits those who it was originally meant to serve, a revision of RA No. 7941 is both urgent and necessary.

¹ <https://mb.com.ph/2025/2/25/party-list-system-don-t-marginalize-the-marginalized>

This measure therefore proposes the adoption of clearer and stricter rules on the qualifications for party-list nominees, including a requirement that candidates genuinely represent marginalized sectors and possess a proven track record of service to these communities. The bill likewise enumerates several grounds for disqualification—such as nominees being related to one another, in order to prevent dynasties within the party-list system, as well as those having financial interests in government— to protect the integrity of the system and ensure that it is not used for personal or political gain

Based on the foregoing reasons, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



FELIMON M. ESPARES
Congressman



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

1 **SECTION 1. *Title.*** – This Act shall be known as "*Party-List System Reform Act.*"

2
3 **SEC. 2.** Section 5 of Republic Act 7941, otherwise known as the "Party-List System Act,"
4 is hereby amended to read as follows:

5
6 Section 5. Registration. Any organized group of persons may
7 register as a party, organization or coalition for purposes of the
8 party-list system by filing with the COMELEC not later than [ninety
9 (90)] **ONE HUNDRED TWENTY (120)** days before the election a
10 petition verified by its president or secretary stating its desire to
11 participate in the party-list system as a national, regional or sectoral
12 party or organization or a coalition of such parties or organizations,
13 attaching thereto its constitution, by-laws, platform or program of
14 government, list of officers, coalition agreement and other relevant
15 information as the COMELEC may require: Provided, That the
16 sectors shall include labor, peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor,

1 indigenous cultural communities, elderly, handicapped, women,
2 youth, veterans, overseas workers, and professionals. The
3 COMELEC shall publish the petition in at least two (2) national
4 newspapers of general circulation.
5

6 **NO GROUP, ORGANIZATION OR POLITICAL PARTY SHALL**
7 **BE ELIGIBLE FOR REGISTRATION AS A PARTY-LIST GROUP**
8 **UNLESS IT HAS PROVEN IN AN EVIDENTIARY PUBLIC**
9 **HEARING THAT SHALL BE CONDUCTED BY THE COMELEC**
10 **THAT IT TRULY REPRESENTS MARGINALIZED AND**
11 **UNDERREPRESENTED SECTOR/S AND ITS NOMINEES**
12 **BELONG TO THE SECTOR/S THEY SEEK TO REPRESENT;**
13 ***PROVIDED*, THAT COMELEC SHALL NOTIFY ALL DULY**
14 **REGISTERED AND ACCREDITED PARTY-LIST GROUPS,**
15 **ORGANIZATION OR POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE HEARING**
16 **AT LEAST TEN DAYS PRIOR TO THE SAID HEARING.**
17

18 The COMELEC shall, after due notice and hearing, resolve the
19 petition within fifteen (15) days from the date it was submitted for
20 decision but in no case not later than ninety (90) days before
21 election.
22

23 **SEC. 3.** Section 6 of the said Act is hereby amended to read as follows:
24

25 Section 6. Refusal and/or Cancellation of Registration. The
26 COMELEC may, *motu proprio* or upon verified complaint of any
27 interested party, refuse or cancel, after due notice and hearing,
28 the registration of any national, regional or sectoral party,
29 organization or coalition on any of the following grounds:
30

31 XXX
32

33 **(9) IT DOES NOT REPRESENT MARGINALIZED AND**
34 **UNDERREPRESENTED SECTOR/S.**
35

36 **SEC. 4.** Section 7 of the said Act is hereby amended to read as follows:
37

38 Section 7. Certified List of Registered Parties. The COMELEC shall,
39 not later than [sixty (60)] **NINETY (90)** days before election,
40 prepare a certified list of national, regional, or sectoral parties,
41 organizations or coalitions which have applied or who have
42 manifested their desire to participate under the party-list system
43 and distribute copies thereof to all precincts for posting in the

1 polling places on election day. The names of the party-list nominees
2 shall not be shown on the certified list.
3

4 **SEC. 5.** Section 8 of the said Act is hereby amended to read as follows:
5

6 Section 8. Nomination of Party-List Representatives. - Each
7 registered party, organization, or coalition shall submit to the
8 Commission on Elections (COMELEC) not later than **SIXTY** (60)
9 days before the election a list of names, not less than **SIX** (6), from
10 which party-list representatives shall be chosen in case it obtains
11 the required number of votes. **THE LIST OF NOMINEES TO BE**
12 **SUBMITTED TO THE COMELEC MUST BE APPROVED BY THE**
13 **HIGHEST DECISION-MAKING BODY OF THE PARTY-LIST**
14 **GROUP.**
15

16 A person may be nominated in one (1) list only. Only persons who
17 have given their consent in writing may be named in the list. The
18 list shall not include any candidate for any elective office of person
19 who has lost [his] **THEIR** bid for an elective office in the
20 immediately preceding election. No change of names or alteration
21 of the order of the nominees shall be allowed after the same shall
22 have been submitted to the COMELEC except where the nominee
23 dies, [or withdraws in writing his nomination] or becomes
24 incapacitated, in which case the name of the substitute nominees
25 shall be placed last in the list. Incumbent sectoral representatives
26 in the House of Representatives who are nominated in the party-list
27 system shall not be considered resigned.
28

29 **NO PERSON OCCUPYING AN APPOINTIVE OR ELECTIVE**
30 **POST SHALL BE INCLUDED IN THE LIST UNLESS THEY**
31 **ENCLOSE THEREIN THEIR LETTER OF RESIGNATION TO**
32 **THAT OFFICE AND THE DUE ACCEPTANCE OR APPROVAL**
33 **THEREOF.**
34
35

36 **SEC. 6.** Section 9 of the said Act is hereby amended to read as follows:
37

38 Section 9. Qualifications **AND DISQUALIFICATIONS** of Party-List
39 Nominees. No person shall be nominated as party-list
40 representative unless [he is] **THEY ARE** a natural-born citizen of
41 the Philippines, a registered voter, a resident of the Philippines for
42 a period of not less than one (1) year immediately preceding the
43 day of the election, able to read and write, a bona fide member of
44 the party or organization which [he] **THEY** seek[s] to represent for

1 at least ninety (90) days preceding the day of [the election] **THE**
2 **FILING OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATION**, and is at
3 least twenty-five (25) years of age on the day of the election. In
4 case of a nominee of the youth sector, [he] **THEY** must at least be
5 twenty-five (25) but not more than thirty (30) years of age on the
6 day of the election. Any youth sectoral representative who attains
7 the age of thirty (30) during [his] **THEIR** term shall be allowed to
8 continue in office until the expiration of [his] **THEIR** term.
9

10 **9.1 ALL NOMINEES, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE YOUTH**
11 **SECTOR, SHALL NOT BE QUALIFIED TO BECOME A PARTY-**
12 **LIST NOMINEE IF THEY ARE A PERSON:**
13

14 **(a) WHO WERE ELECTED AND SERVED OFFICE AT ANY TIME**
15 **AS PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SENATOR, DISTRICT**
16 **REPRESENTATIVE, GOVERNOR, VICE GOVERNOR, MAYOR,**
17 **AND VICE MAYOR;**
18

19 **(b) WHO ARE RELATED BY AFFINITY OR CONSANGUINITY**
20 **TO THE 4TH DEGREE, TO INCUMBENT GOVERNMENT**
21 **OFFICIALS REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH (a) ABOVE;**
22

23 **(c) WHO ARE RELATED TO EACH OTHER BY AFFINITY OR**
24 **CONSANGUINITY WITHIN THE 4TH DEGREE, IF THERE**
25 **WOULD BE AT LEAST THREE (3) OF THEM NOMINATED**
26 **UNDER THE SAME PARTY-LIST;**
27

28 **(d) WHO WERE APPOINTED AND SERVED OFFICE FROM**
29 **THE POSITION OF BUREAU CHIEF UP TO ANY POSITION IN**
30 **THE CABINET WITHIN FIVE YEARS FROM THE PARTY-LIST**
31 **ELECTION THEY ARE BEING NOMINATED FOR;**
32

33 **(e) WHO IS OR HAD BEEN A CONTRACTOR IN ANY**
34 **GOVERNMENT PROJECT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO**
35 **INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, WHETHER AS AN**
36 **INDIVIDUAL OR AS AN INCORPORATOR, DIRECTOR,**
37 **OFFICER, OR PERSON IN ANY WAY RELATED TO A**
38 **CORPORATION THAT IS OR HAD BEEN A CONTRACTOR;**
39

40 **(f) WHO SERVED AS THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR OF THE**
41 **PNP OR BATTALION COMMANDER OF THE AFP OR ANY**
42 **HIGHER POSITION WITHIN FIVE YEARS FROM THE PARTY-**
43 **LIST ELECTION THEY ARE BEING NOMINATED FOR; AND,**
44

1 (g) WHOSE INCOME IS MORE THAN THE BASE PAY OF A
2 PARTY-LIST MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES IN THE CONGRESS DURING THE
4 PARTY-LIST ELECTION THEY ARE NOMINATED FOR.
5

6 NOMINEES SHALL SUBMIT TO THE PARTY-LIST
7 ORGANIZATION THEY WISH TO REPRESENT AND THE
8 COMELEC UPON THE FILING OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF
9 NOMINATION, THEIR LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN AND
10 STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES (SALN) WHICH
11 SHALL BE OPEN TO THE SCRUTINY OF THE PUBLIC AND
12 ANY INTERESTED PARTY.
13

14 **SEC. 7.** Section 10 shall be inserted as a new provision:
15

16 **SECTION 10. DISQUALIFICATION OF A PARTY-LIST**
17 **NOMINEE. THE COMELEC MAY, *MOTU PROPRIO* OR UPON A**
18 **VERIFIED COMPLAINT OF ANY INTERESTED PARTY,**
19 **REFUSE OR CANCEL, AFTER DUE NOTICE AND HEARING,**
20 **THE CERTIFICATE OF NOMINATION AND/OR ACCEPTANCE**
21 **OF SAID NOMINEE IF THEY POSSESS ANY OF THE**
22 **DISQUALIFICATIONS ENUMERATED IN THE PRECEDING**
23 **SECTION, WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE OTHER NOMINEES**
24 **LISTED THEREIN AND SUBJECT TO THE GUIDELINES TO BE**
25 **PROMULGATED BY THE COMELEC.**
26

27 **SEC. 8.** Sections 11 up to 22 of the Said Act shall be renumbered respectively.
28

29 **SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.*** — All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations and other
30 issuance inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are deemed modified, revoked or
31 repealed accordingly.
32

33 **SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** — If any of the sections or provisions of this Act is held
34 invalid, all the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.
35

36 **SEC. 11. *Effectivity.*** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of its
37 publication in the Official Gazette or any newspaper of general circulation.
38

39 *Approved,*
40
41