



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH (20TH) CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7768

Introduced by KAMANGGAGAWA Partylist
Representative **ELIJAH R. SAN FERNANDO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Elections in the Philippines continue to be plagued by vote-buying, a practice that remains prevalent despite its clear prohibition under existing electoral laws. Over time, vote-buying has shifted from being regarded as a punishable offense to a normalized feature of the electoral process. For more than four decades, this illegal practice has become deeply entrenched in our political and electoral landscape and widely recognized by the voting public. Studies have shown that vote-buying operates within systems of patronage and social reciprocity, wherein the distribution of money or material goods creates an expectation of political support in return.

Republic Act No. 6646 and the Omnibus Election Code prohibit vote-buying and provide mechanisms for investigation and prosecution. However, enforcement has remained weak due to evidentiary challenges, limited institutional capacity, and entrenched political patronage.

Existing laws have also tended to penalize voters who receive money or material inducements, despite the reality that many such voters act under conditions of poverty, vulnerability, and coercion. Criminalizing impoverished voters does not address the root causes of electoral corruption and instead deepens social injustice.

This proposed measure seeks to strengthen the legal framework against vote-buying by focusing accountability on candidates, political parties, financiers, and intermediaries who organize and benefit from these illegal schemes. At the same time, it adopts a rights-based and pro-poor approach by protecting voters from criminal liability and providing them with education and assistance.

By imposing stricter penalties on vote buyers and organizers while safeguarding voters, this bill aims to protect the sanctity of the ballot, restore public confidence in electoral processes, and promote clean, fair, and credible elections.

In solidarity with the working class, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



ELIJAH R. SAN FERNANDO
Representative
KAMANGGAWA PARTYLIST



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AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE PROHIBITION AGAINST VOTE-BUYING, PROVIDING
STIFFER PENALTIES FOR OFFENDERS, PROTECTING VOTERS FROM CRIMINAL
LIABILITY, 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 "**Vote-Buying Prevention and Voter Protection Act.**"

SECTION 2. *Declaration Of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State, in accordance with Article V of the 1987 Constitution, to uphold the sanctity of the Filipino vote and ensure free, honest, orderly, and credible elections.

The State shall exercise zero tolerance for vote-buying and related practices that undermine democratic governance. It shall hold accountable candidates, political parties, financiers, and intermediaries who engage in such acts, while protecting voters from criminal liability and addressing the socio-economic conditions that enable electoral manipulation.

SECTION 3. *Definition Of Terms.* For purposes of this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

(a) **Vote-Buying** – refers to any act of giving, offering, or promising money, legal tender, digital money, cheques, goods, services, employment, contracts, or any other thing of value, directly or indirectly, in consideration for a vote.

(b) **Vote-Selling** – refers to the act of receiving or accepting money or any thing of value in exchange for one’s vote, which shall be treated as a prohibited practice arising from coercion, poverty, or undue influence, and shall not give rise to criminal liability under this Act.

(c) **Buyer** – refers to any candidate, political party, agent, representative, or person who commits vote-buying as defined under this Act.

(d) **Solicitor** – refers to any person who induces, facilitates, brokers, or coordinates vote-buying schemes.

(e) **Political Party** – refers to any national, regional, or local political party or party-list organization registered with the Commission on Elections.

(f) **Political Group** – refers to any group, association, or network formed to promote or support candidates.

SECTION 4. *Prohibited Acts.* *The following acts shall constitute offenses under this Act:*

- a. The following acts shall constitute offenses under this Act:
- b. (a) Directly or indirectly giving, offering, or promising money or any thing of value, including legal tender, digital money, cheques, promise of employment, grant of service, or agreement in a public or private contract, in exchange for a vote;
- c. (b) Acting as intermediary, broker, facilitator, or coordinator in vote-buying schemes;
- d. (c) Organizing, financing, managing, or supervising vote-buying operations;
- e. (d) Possessing large amounts of cash, goods, or campaign materials under circumstances indicating intent to commit vote-buying, as determined by Commission on Elections (COMELEC) rules.

SECTION 5. *Jurisdiction of Vote-Buying Offenses.* Complaints for violations of this Act shall be filed in accordance with the Rules of Criminal Procedure and other applicable laws.

The Commission on Elections, in coordination with the Department of Justice, shall receive, evaluate, and investigate complaints and initiate appropriate criminal proceedings.

The Regional Trial Courts shall have exclusive original jurisdiction over offenses punishable under this Act. The Supreme Court may designate special courts for the expeditious disposition of cases.

SECTION 6. *Prosecution of Vote-Buying Offenses.* The prosecution of offenses under this Act shall take precedence over other cases handled by the Department of Justice and the Commission on Elections.

The chairman, president, head, or leader of a political party or organization who knowingly tolerates, authorizes, or benefits from vote-buying shall be presumed liable, unless proven otherwise.

Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Supreme Court, in coordination with the Commission on Elections and the Department of Justice, shall promulgate special rules for the speedy disposition of cases.

Witnesses who voluntarily cooperate and testify may be granted immunity in accordance with existing laws and rules.

SECTION 7. *Penalty Clause.* Any individual, organization, or party found to be in violation of this Act shall be subject to penalties as follows:

(a) For Buyers, Organizers, and Financiers.

Any person convicted under Section 4(a) or 4(c) shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of twelve (12) years to twenty (20) years, a fine of not less than Five Million Pesos (₱5,000,000.00), and perpetual absolute disqualification from public office.

If the offense is committed by a syndicate, involves public funds, or exceeds One Million Pesos (₱1,000,000.00), the penalty shall be reclusion perpetua.

(b) For Solicitors and Intermediaries.

Any person convicted under Section 4(b) shall suffer imprisonment of six (6) years to twelve (12) years, a fine of not less than Two Million Pesos (₱2,000,000.00), and perpetual disqualification from public office.

(c) For Political Parties and Organizations.

Political parties and organizations found liable under this Act shall suffer cancellation of registration and permanent disqualification from participation in any electoral process.

(d) Additional Penalties.

All proceeds and instrumentalities of vote-buying shall be forfeited in favor of the government. Convicted public officials shall forfeit retirement and separation benefits.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof that are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,