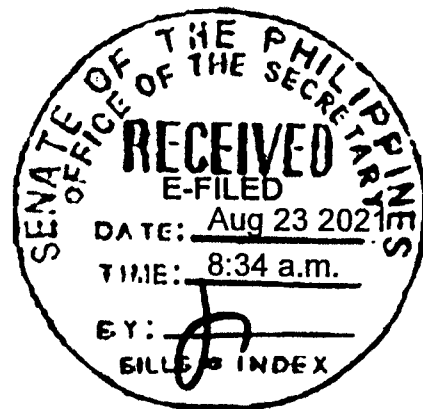


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



SENATE

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 851

Introduced by Senators FRANCIS N. PANGILINAN, RALPH G. RECTO, FRANKLIN M. DRILON, MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY, LEILA M. DE LIMA, RISA HONTIVEROS, JOEL VILLANUEVA

RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION FROM SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 TO OCTOBER 31, 2021 TO PREVENT VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) is constitutionally-mandated to “[e]nforce and administer all laws and regulations relative to the conduct of an election, plebiscite, initiative, referendum, and recall”¹ and has the power to determine periods to accomplish pre-election activities, such as voter registration²;

WHEREAS, registration is part and parcel of the right to vote and an indispensable element in the election process³;

WHEREAS, under Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 or the Voter’s Registration Act of 1996, COMELEC shall establish a system of continuing registration of voters.⁴ However, no registration shall be conducted during the period starting one hundred twenty (120) days before a regular election and ninety (90) days before a special election⁵;

WHEREAS, COMELEC promulgated COMELEC Resolution No. 10549⁶ on July 18, 2019 and COMELEC Resolution No. 10635⁷ on January 10, 2020, setting voter registration for the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections (NLE) from January 20, 2020 until September 30, 2021⁸;

¹ Const., art. IX-C, sec. 2(1).

² See *Kabataan Party-list v. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. 221318, December 16, 2015.

³ See *Akbayan-Youth v. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. 147066, March 26, 2001.

⁴ Rep. Act. No. 8189, sec. 8.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ RULES AND REGULATIONS ON THE RESUMPTION OF THE SYSTEM OF CONTINUING REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.

⁷ SUPPLEMENTAL RULES AND REGULATIONS OF RESOLUTION NO. 10549 PROMULGATED ON JULY 18, 2019 ON THE RESUMPTION OF THE SYSTEM OF CONTINUING REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

⁸ See COMELEC Resolution No. 10549, sec. 4

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, COMELEC suspended voter registration starting March 10, 2020 due to the COVID-19.⁹ After a series of extensions, voter registration was suspended until August 31, 2020 or more than five and a half months¹⁰;

WHEREAS, on August 12, 2020, COMELEC promulgated COMELEC Resolution No. 10674 which set the protocols on conducting voter registration under the new normal. Under COMELEC Resolution No. 10674, voter registration in areas under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) shall be suspended for the duration of the ECQ or MECQ status.¹¹

WHEREAS, in late March 2021, voter registration in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna, and Cavite (NCR Plus), was suspended due to the imposition of ECQ and/or MECQ.¹² Voter registration in NCR Plus resumed after nearly two months on May 17, 2021, when quarantine restrictions relaxed to general community quarantine on May 15, 2021¹³;

WHEREAS, in early August 2021, COMELEC again suspended voter registration in ECQ and MECQ areas, including Metro Manila, Cavite, Rizal, Laguna, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Lucena, etc., for at least two weeks¹⁴;

WHEREAS, in a hearing of the Senate Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation on February 18, 2021, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) mentioned that the projected voting population for the 2022 NLE is at 73.3 million. As of June 2021, the COMELEC said that there are around 60 million registered voters as of June 2021, leaving around 13.3 million unregistered potential voters;

WHEREAS, while it is also important for COMELEC to have enough time to prepare the final list of voters, which is a prerequisite for the preparation and completion of the Project of Precincts (POP),¹⁵ a one-month extension will not unduly hamper or delay COMELEC's preparation of the POP. In fact, in previous national and local elections, COMELEC set deadlines that are on or beyond October 31 of the year before elections, namely:

National and Local Elections	Voter Registration Deadline
2001	December 27, 2000 ¹⁶
2004	October 31, 2003 ¹⁷
2007	December 31, 2006 ¹⁸
2010	January 9, 2010 ¹⁹
2013	October 31, 2012 ²⁰

⁹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/comelec-suspends-voter-registration-coronavirus-threat>

¹⁰ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/comelec-extends-suspension-voter-registration-june-30-2020>;

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1299499/voter-registration-suspended-until-august-31-comelec>

¹¹ See COMELEC Resolution No. 10674, par. 1.

¹² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/comelec-voter-registration-2022-resumes-ncr-plus-may-17-2021>

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1149652>

¹⁵ See *Kabataan Party-list v. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. 221318, December 16, 2015.

¹⁶ *Akbayan-Youth v. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. 147066, March 26, 2001.

¹⁷ COMELEC Resolution No. 6216 dated July 18, 2003.

¹⁸ <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/24729/voters-have-only-until-dec-31-to-register-comelec/story/>

¹⁹ *Kabataan Party-list Representative Raymond V. Palatino v. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. 189868, December 15, 2009.

²⁰ COMELEC Resolution No. 9149 dated February 11, 2011.

National and Local Elections	Voter Registration Deadline
2016	October 31, 2015 ²¹

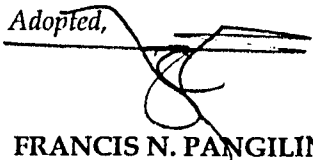
WHEREAS, in *Kabataan Party-list v. Commission on Elections* (G.R. No. 221318, December 16, 2015), the Supreme Court recognized COMELEC's power to set the deadline of voter registration, provided no registration may be done during the period starting one hundred twenty (120) days before a regular election. The Court also recognized COMELEC's prerogative in setting the deadline for registration, taking into consideration administrative necessities and *other exigencies* in setting such date;

WHEREAS, considering the five-and-a-half-month suspension (approximately 28.3% of the entire registration period) of voter registration across the country and, after that, month-long suspensions in areas under ECQ and MECQ brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (some areas, such as Metro Manila, lost up to 38.6% of the entire registration period), COMELEC has the prerogative to set the deadline of voter registration on a later date but before January 9, 2022, taking into consideration this public health emergency, in order to prevent voter disenfranchisement;

WHEREAS, COMELEC set the September 30, 2021 deadline before the COVID-19 pandemic. In this connection, COMELEC could not have anticipated the adverse impact of the pandemic on voter registration and must make the necessary adjustments to allow more unregistered potential voters to register;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved to express the sense of the Senate of the Philippines urging the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to extend the deadline for voter registration from September 30, 2021 to October 31, 2021 to prevent voter disenfranchisement brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adopted,


FRANCIS N. PANGILINAN


FRANKLIN M. DRILON


LEILA M. DE LIMA


RALPH G. RECTO


MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY


RISA HONTIVEROS


JOEL VILLANUEVA

²¹ COMELEC Resolution No. 9853 dated February 19, 2014.