

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2128



Introduced by **KABATAAN PARTY-LIST Representative Sarah Jane I. Elago,**
ACT TEACHERS PARTY-LIST Representative France L. Castro,
BAYAN MUNA PARTY-LIST Representatives Carlos Isagani T. Zarate,
Ferdinand Gaite and Eufemia C. Cullamat,
and **GABRIELA WOMEN'S PARTY Representative Arlene D. Brosas**

RESOLUTION
URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR
VOTER REGISTRATION TO DETER MASSIVE VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT
AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, the 1987 Constitution declares the Philippines as a democratic and republican country. As such, free, fair, and regular elections are critical to the functioning of our democracy; our right to vote, i.e. suffrage, lies at the heart of our constitutional democracy. The right of every Filipino to choose the leaders who will lead the country and participate, to the fullest extent possible, in every national and local election is zealously guarded by the fundamental law of our land that it devoted an entire article solely for suffrage (Article V);¹

WHEREAS, it is the mandate of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to ensure the conduct of regular and special elections, and by extension, to ensure the maximum participation of citizens in the elections and the quality of such elections;

WHEREAS, Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 or the Voter's Registration Act of 1996 states that the COMELEC shall establish a system of continuing registration of voters so long as no registration shall be conducted during the period starting one hundred (120) days before a regular election and ninety (90) days before a special election;

WHEREAS, COMELEC promulgated Resolution Nos. 10549 and 10635 on July 18, 2019 and January 10, 2020, respectively, to state the rules and regulations on the resumption of the system of continuing registration of voters, and the set voter registration period for the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections (NLE): from

¹ Kabataan Party-list et al v. Commission on Elections, G.R. No. 189868, December 15, 2009.

January 20, 2020 until September 30, 2021;

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, COMELEC, however, suspended voter registration starting March 10, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The said suspension was stretched until August 31, 2020;

WHEREAS, last August 12, 2020, the COMELEC promulgated Resolution No. 10674, which laid out regulations regarding voter's registration amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, including restrictions on operations in different quarantine areas;

WHEREAS, these regulations suspended the start of voter's registration in areas under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) and Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) which caused delays in voter's registration in major urban centers;

WHEREAS, considering the five-and-a-half-month suspension which is equivalent to approximately 28.3% or 164 days of the voter registration period 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;

WHEREAS, recently, further suspensions of voter's registration in areas under ECQ were implemented due to the onset of community transmission of the Delta Variant;

WHEREAS, satellite voter's registration has decreased from the previous years and centers have further been crippled by strict COVID-19 regulations since March due to a nationwide suspension;

WHEREAS, months before the deadline, qualified voters encounter registration problems hindering them from enlisting for the 2022 elections.² Among the reported concerns are limited registration slots offered by local COMELEC offices or local governments, ineffective registration sites due to various factors such as, but not limited to, sudden or scheduled registration early cut-off because of crashing or down online voter registration system and long lines due to staff shortage--situations prompting people to start lining up even as early as 4:00 a.m., among others;

WHEREAS, the backlog and challenges in voter's registration threaten to disenfranchise an estimated 13.1 million prospective voters in the upcoming 2022 national elections;

² Iya Gozum, *Months before deadline, qualified voters encounter registration problems*, Rappler, Aug. 15, 2021, available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/qualified-voters-encounter-registration-problems-2022>.

WHEREAS, many people’s organizations and groups have called for the extension of the voter registration deadline, and it is Congress’ duty to heed and act upon these demands;

WHEREAS, while we recognize COMELEC’s need to have ample time to prepare the final list of voters, which is a prerequisite for the preparation and completion of the Project of Precincts (POP), the youth and the people believe that at least a month extension would not delay that much COMELEC’s preparation of the POP. In fact, there are previous instances in which COMELEC set deadlines that are on or even beyond October 31 of the year before elections:

NLE	Voter Registration Deadline
2001	December 27, 2000
2004	October 31, 2003
2007	December 31, 2006
2010	January 9, 2010
2013	October 31, 2012

WHEREAS, thus, extending voter registration is all the more a prudent thing to do and is also already an imperative as we have just and heavier reasons to reimplement it now more than ever;

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court has already acknowledged before that the COMELEC has the power to set the deadline of voter’s registration 120 days before the day of the elections;³

WHEREAS, the September 30 deadline was set before the COVID-19 pandemic and it now falls upon the COMELEC’s prerogative to adjust the deadline due to the ramifications of the pandemic;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Members of the House of Representatives urge the Commission on Elections to extend the deadline for voter registration until at least October 31, 2021 to deter massive voter disenfranchisement amid COVID-19 pandemic.

³ Kabataan Party-list vs. COMELEC, G.R. No. 221318, December 16, 2015.

Adopted,



Rep. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabataan Party-list



Rep. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Party-list



Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Party-list



Rep. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Party-list



Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS
Gabriela Women's Party



Rep. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
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