INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES ALAN PETER “COMPAÑERO” S.
CAYETANO, MARIA LAARNI L. CAYETANO, LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F.
VILLAFUERTE, JR., RANEO E. ABU, DAN S. FERNANDEZ, MICHAEL T.
DEFENSOR, AND JOSE ANTONIO “KUYA” R. SY-ALVARADO

RESOLUTION

STRONGLY URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) TO START
HOLDING DEBATES BEFORE THE END OF 2021 AMONG THE PRESIDENTIAL,
VICE PRESIDENTIAL, AND SENATORIAL ASPIRANTS TO UPHOLD THE
PEOPLE’S RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND ACCORD CANDIDATES EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD AND TO REPLY, FOR THE PROPER EXERCISE OF
THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE

WHEREAS, the bible teaches us in Proverbs 15:14 that “A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but
the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.”;

WHEREAS, in the case of Osmeña v. Commission on Elections, the Supreme Court emphasized
that “discussion of public issues and debate on the qualifications of candidates in an election are
essential to the proper functioning of the government established by our Constitution.”

WHEREAS, the 1987 Constitution recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of
public concern;

WHEREAS, the 09 May 2022 National and Local Elections will be the most momentous election to
date because no less than the lives and livelihoods of Filipinos, who have been greatly affected by the
coronavirus pandemic, will be at stake;

WHEREAS, for the month of October 2021 alone, more than 400,000 new voters registered for the
upcoming elections and, prior to this, more than five (5) million new voters registered — double the
usual average of 1.5 to 2 million — bringing the total number of registered voters in the country to
62 million;
WHEREAS, the Honorable Commission is tasked to ensure the meaningful exercise of the right of
suffrage of our electorate by helping them make informed choices on election day;

WHEREAS, the duty of the COMELEC is not only to ensure that the electorate gets to vote and
their votes are counted in a fast and accurate manner, but also “to ensure equal opportunity, time, and
space, and the right to reply, including reasonable, equal rates therefor, for public information
campaigns and forums among candidates in connection with the objective of holding free, orderly, honest, peaceful, and credible elections;"

WHEREAS, holding more debates and starting them earlier is key to informed choices as these debates will give the electorate ample opportunity to examine the candidates’ qualifications, track record, platforms, programs, and stand on issues of national concern;

WHEREAS, three (3) presidential debates and one (1) vice presidential debate – like that in the run-up to the 2016 National and Local Elections – are hardly sufficient for our electorate to get to know the candidates, their plans, and platforms, and therefore make an informed choice on election day;

WHEREAS, the COMELEC may hold monthly debates commencing in November or December 2021 until the month of April 2022, where all candidates for president shall be invited to participate in a total of at least five (5) debates;

WHEREAS, at the same time, the COMELEC may hold a weekly debate, or a total of at least fifteen (15) debates, where two presidential candidates shall be invited to participate in each debate;

WHEREAS, the COMELEC is encouraged to once again work with all forms of media, the academe, and the private sector to organize and conduct the debates;

WHEREAS, debates will further serve as basis for accountability of elected officials, and allow for a safer way of information dissemination during this pandemic since television, radio broadcasting, as well as the internet, will be maximized to provide as much relevant information to the voters as possible;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives, to strongly urge the Commission on Elections to start holding debates before the end of 2021 among the presidential, vice presidential, and senatorial aspirants to uphold the people’s right to information and accord candidates equal opportunity to be heard and to reply, for the proper exercise of the right of suffrage.

Adopted,

ALAN PETER “COMPANERNO” S. CAYETANO
MARIA LAARNI L. CAYETANO
LUIS RAYMUND “RAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.
RANEO E. ABU
DAN S. FERNANDEZ
MICHAEL T. DEFENSOR

JOSE ANTONIO “KUYA” R. SY-ALVARADO

1 1987 CONST., Art. IX-C, Sec. 4.