

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
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House Resolution No. 2538



INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS

A RESOLUTION
URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC), THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE), THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
(DEPED), AND OTHER NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND
STAKEHOLDERS TO ENSURE AND FULLY COMMIT TO
“100% BROWNOUT-FREE SCHOOLS” TO SAFEGUARD THE
INTEGRITY OF THE 2022 NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

WHEREAS, the May 9, 2022 elections shall use over 100,000 polling places for the election of national and local seats, from the President of the Republic of the Philippines to councilors in 146 cities and 1,488 municipalities;¹

WHEREAS, over 500,000 dedicated public school teachers and personnel serve in various capacities across more than 30,000 schools to fulfill this herculean task of ensuring an orderly elections;²

WHEREAS, our public school teachers, principals, supervisors, and educators have been very diligent at safeguarding the sanctity of the ballot so that every Filipino is able to exercise his or her sacred right to suffrage;

¹ “The Commission on Elections (Comelec) is planning to increase to over 100,000 the number of polling precincts for the May 2022 elections. The move aims to prevent overcrowding in polling precincts and ensure that the voting will not spawn super spreader events for the COVID-19 virus.” Mayen Jaymalin, ‘More polling precincts eyed for 2022 elections,’ *Philippine Star* (July 5, 2021).

² Sofia Tomacruz, ‘Over 500,000 teachers to serve as poll workers on May 13—DepEd,’ *Rappler* (May 11, 2019).

WHEREAS, the security and integrity of the 2022 Elections are intrinsically tied to the integrity of electronic voting counting machines (VCMs) and other electronic devices, and the unimpeded operation and administration of the elections in the polling centers require a stable and dependable power source;

WHEREAS, despite the importance of stable electrical connections, the Department of Energy (DOE) has previously raised the possibility of rotational brownouts and power interruptions due to “extremely strained power reserves” during the election season, especially in Luzon;³

WHEREAS, a February 2022 study by a policy group concluded that for the second quarter of the year, “the power supply outlook is very tight” and there is “a possibility of red alert status, high electricity costs, and rotating blackouts across the Luzon grid;”⁴

WHEREAS, apart from concerns on power generation, consultative meetings with education stakeholders have revealed that some schools face electrical infrastructure constraints, and some school buildings are not even fully connected to electricity;

WHEREAS, according to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, the lack of electricity access has, indeed, been a perennial infrastructure constraint among Philippine schools and in the ASEAN Region, “the country is among those that have yet to achieve universal access of schools to electricity;”⁵

³ “The Department of Energy (DOE) has admitted the inevitable possibility of ‘red alert’ condition in the Luzon grid that could trigger rotational brownouts for consumers in the two weeks after the election period in May. In a presentation to the media, DOE Director Mario C. Marasigan noted that based on their updated forecast, occurrence of “red alert” or extremely strained power reserves for Luzon could be on the weeks of May 16 and May 23, and this would be the period right after the May 9 elections.” Myrna Velasco, ‘DOE admits ‘brownout possibilities’ in May,’ *Manila Bulletin* (January 25, 2022).

⁴ “By applying more conservative assumptions, findings show that the power supply outlook is very tight for Q2 2022, with a possibility of red alert status, high electricity costs, and rotating blackouts across the Luzon grid. The yellow alert status last January 11, 2022, supports this finding. Typically, the demand during January is lower due to cooler temperatures. But despite this, the 2,317 MW operating reserves projected by the NGCP depleted to 388 MW (an 83% drop) when several coal plants went on forced outages, showing this factor to be an essential consideration in a power outlook.” Alberto Dalusong III, et al. *Luzon Power Outlook: Determining the Adequacy of Power Supply for April-June 2022*. Institute for Climate and Sustainability Cities (2022).

⁵ Louise Maureen Simon, ‘Philippines needs more investment in school infrastructure – PIDS,’ *Philippine Star* (March 24, 2022).

WHEREAS, this problem is “compounded by the need to upgrade the electricity connections of schools to stabilize electricity current fluctuations and meet digital learning requirements;”⁵

WHEREAS, the risk of unstable power supplies to our schools should be treated with great concern, especially as brownouts during election day have been historically viewed as badges of electoral fraud;^{6,7}

WHEREAS, it is the mandate of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to prescribe rules that fulfill the right to suffrage of our fellow Filipinos so that, in the words of the Supreme Court, “each time the enfranchised citizen goes to the polls to assert this sovereign will, that abiding credo of republicanism is translated into living reality;”⁸

WHEREAS, part of COMELEC’s mandate is institution’s objective of holding “free, orderly, honest, peaceful, and credible elections,”⁹ which means utilizing an automated election system that will ensure the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot and all election, consolidation, and transmission documents in order that the process shall be transparent and credible and that the results shall be fast, accurate and reflective of the genuine will of the people;¹⁰

WHEREAS, the COMELEC and its personnel have been steadfast and committed to fully pursuing their mandate and have demonstrated great proactiveness in ensuring the public’s faith in our democratic process;

WHEREAS, despite the great work that the COMELEC and DepEd have done, a multi-stakeholder approach is necessary to determine the full extent of electric infrastructure constraints of our public schools and polling places and the same approach is critical in addressing these problems promptly and effectively;

⁶ See, e.g., David E. Sanger, ‘Power Failures Slow Philippine Vote Count and Feed Suspicions of Fraud,’ *New York Times* (May 24, 1992).

⁷ Myrna Velasco, ‘Solon warns of ‘distorted’ election results amid threats of brownouts,’ *Manila Bulletin* (January 20, 2022).

⁸ *People v. San Juan*, G.R. No. L-22944, February 10, 1968.

⁹ CONST., art. IX-C, §§ 2(4), 4.

¹⁰ “It is policy of the State to ensure free, orderly, honest, peaceful, credible and informed elections, plebiscites, referenda, recall and other similar electoral exercises by improving on the election process and adopting systems, which shall involved the use of an automated election system that will ensure the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot and all election, consolidation and transmission documents on order that the process shall be transparent and credible and that the results shall be fast, accurate and reflective of the genuine will of the people.” Republic Act No. 9369, §1, amending Republic Act No. 8436, §1.

WHEREAS, to ensure that COMELEC’s duty to the Filipino people is met, the unity of the DepEd and DOE, as well as other concerned or relevant national government agencies, and other stakeholders in both the public and private sector is necessary;

WHEREAS, a joint assessment should be made to identify the extent of the issue and, thereafter, to urgently craft risk mitigation strategies, including, among others, budgetary support to public schools for electrical infrastructure enhancement;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, to urge the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Education (DepEd), and other National Government Agencies and Stakeholders to ensure and to fully commit to “100% Brownout-Free Schools” to safeguard the integrity of the 2022 National and Local Elections.

Adopted,



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