



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4136

INTRODUCED BY REP. HARRIS CHRISTOPHER M. ONGCHUAN

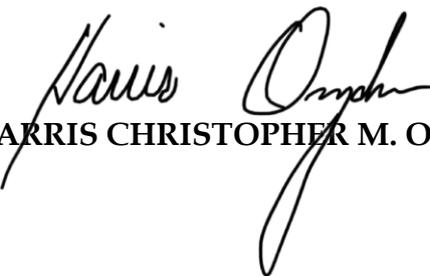
EXPLANATORY NOTE

The voting system in the Philippines requires voters to line up and wait for their turn to cast their votes. While senior citizens and persons with disabilities are provided with a priority queue, it still requires them to go outside and line up, sometimes in the sweltering heat, to cast a vote for their future. Moreover, with an ongoing pandemic, it also increases their risk for exposure to COVID-positive individuals which could cause significant damage to their health and safety.

This bill proposes a system in which they can cast their vote within seven (7) working days before the election date. Voting shall be done in safe and accessible polling precincts properly fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids. This allows them to vote at their most convenient time and avoid long lines to greatly reduce their health risks.

This bill was first filed by Representatives Suansing (E.), Suansing (H.), and Aglipay n the 18th Congress. This bill is a copy of the Third Reading Copy that was transmitted to the Senate in the 18th Congress.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


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HARRIS CHRISTOPHER M. ONGCHUAN

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING BY QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS AND
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to make voting convenient for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the elections.

SECTION 2. Early Voting. – For national and local elections, there shall be early voting where qualified senior citizens and PWDs may choose to cast their ballot at accessible establishments designated by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) within seven (7) working days before the date set for the elections.

SECTION 3. Registration. – There shall be a nationwide registration for senior citizens and PWDs to qualify them to avail of this early voting privilege. Those who are not registered under this Act shall vote on Election Day.

SECTION 4. Obligations of the COMELEC. – To ensure the effective implementation of this Act, the COMELEC shall:

(a) Keep a record of senior citizens and PWDs who are registered voters;

(b) Design a registration system, in coordination with local government units, the National Council on Disability Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Health and the Department of Interior and Local Government, that allows senior citizens and PWDs to register and opt for early voting;

(c) Ensure that polling places are safe and accessible to senior citizens and PWDs, and properly fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids, as mandated under Republic Act No. 10366 entitled, "An Act Authorizing the Commission on Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens"; and

(d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting for qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SECTION 5. Appropriations. – The initial amount for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the COMELEC. Thereafter, the funding of which shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 6. Applicability of Other Laws. – The provisions of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881 or the Omnibus Election Code; Republic Act No. 7166, entitled, "An Act Providing for Synchronized National and Local Elections and for Electoral Reforms, Authorizing Appropriations Therefor, and for Other Purposes"; and other election laws not inconsistent herewith shall be applied to facilitate early voting for qualified senior citizens and PWDs.

SECTION 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from its effectivity, the Commission shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, presidential proclamations, rules and regulations or parts thereof, which are contrary to and inconsistent with any provision of 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 a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.

