



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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 5426



Introduced by **HONORABLE ERNESTO “ERNIX” M. DIONISIO, JR.**

AN ACT
PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE MODES OF VOTING FOR HIGHLY VULNERABLE
SECTORS TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10366, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFORE, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

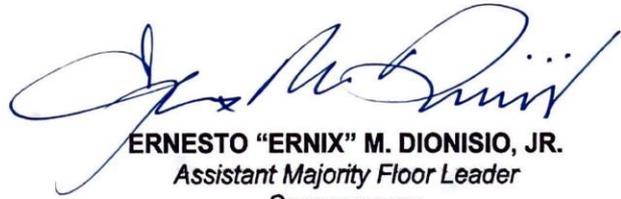
The right to suffrage is one of the most important rights that citizens enjoy. However, not everyone is able to exercise this right due to circumstances limiting them from doing so.

Article V, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution states: “Suffrage may be exercised by all citizens of the Philippines not otherwise disqualified by law, who are at least eighteen years of age, and who shall have resided in the Philippines for at least one year and in the place wherein they propose to vote for at least six months immediately preceding the election. No literacy, property, or other substantive requirements shall be imposed on the exercise of suffrage.”

Likewise, Article V, Section 2 of the 1987 Constitution states: “The Congress shall provide a system for securing the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot as well as a system for absentee voting by qualified Filipinos abroad. Congress shall also design a procedure for the disabled and illiterates to vote without the assistance of other persons. Until then, they shall be allowed to vote under existing laws and such rules as the Commission on Elections may promulgate to protect the secrecy of the ballot”.

In line with these Constitutional provisions, this bill seeks to make voting accessible to the highly vulnerable sectors, as defined herein. It is only befitting that every person not otherwise disqualified by law is able to vote for their representatives in government who may sufficiently address their pressing needs.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ernesto M. Dionisio, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ERNESTO "ERNIX" M. DIONISIO, JR.
Assistant Majority Floor Leader
Congressman
First Congressional District of Manila



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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 5426

Introduced by **HONORABLE ERNESTO “ERNIX” M. DIONISIO, JR.**

AN ACT
PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE MODE OF VOTING FOR HIGHLY VULNERABLE
SECTORS TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFORE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - The State shall ensure that senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, indigenous peoples (IPs), internally displaced persons (IDPs), persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), and in special circumstances, health workers, quarantined and hospitalized persons, and repatriated overseas voters are able to exercise their right to political participation without restrictions. The State shall devise systems and procedures that will enhance accessibility in their voting process.

SECTION 2. Definition of Terms. - As used in this Act, the term:

- (a) "*Commission*" refers to the Commission on Elections.
- (b) "*Senior citizens*" refer to qualified voters who are sixty (60) years or older.
- (c) "*Persons with disabilities*" or "*PWDs*" refer to qualified voters who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- (d) "*Pregnant women*" refer to qualified voters who are pregnant during election day regardless of the number of trimesters. For purposes of local absentee voting, the term shall refer to qualified voters who are pregnant at the time of registration to avail of absentee voting and who, in the natural

course of events, are expected to remain pregnant during the period of absentee voting.

(e) "*Indigenous peoples*" refer to qualified voters who belong to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions, and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains.

(f) "*Internally Displaced Person*" refers to a person who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave home or place of habitual residence within the national borders as a result of, or in order to avoid or minimize, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized and/or organized violence, violations of human rights, implementation of development projects, or natural and human-induced or human-made hazards or disasters.

(g) "*Person Deprived of Liberty*" refers to a detainee, inmate, or prisoner, or other person under confinement or custody in any other manner.

(h) "*Repatriated Overseas Voter*" refers to a citizen of the Philippines registered and allowed to vote under Republic Act No. 9189, as amended, but was repatriated due to special circumstances such as armed conflict, issues in international relations, state of emergency or calamity, or any other analogous circumstances beyond the control or fault of the voter.

SECTION 3. Local Absentee Voting. – The Commission shall extend the right to vote under the Local Absentee Voting System provided under existing laws and executive orders to senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant women, and IDPs qualified to vote. They may cast their ballot for a period of not less than two (2) days within seven (7) calendar days before the election at accessible establishments designated by the Commission.

In the event of a national emergency, responders and persons affected by such emergency and are qualified to vote may avail of the right to Local Absentee Voting: *Provided*, that duty on the day of election is an additional qualification for a health worker to avail of this right. A repatriated overseas voter may avail of the right to Local Absentee Voting only if such voter's repatriation was due to special circumstances such as armed conflict, issues in international relations, state of emergency or

calamity, or any other analogous circumstances beyond the control or fault of the voter.

SECTION 4. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Commission shall, in consultation with other relevant government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations, promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

SECTION 5. Appropriations. - The initial appropriation to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Commission. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 6. Separability Clause. - Should any provision of this Act or part hereof be declared unconstitutional, the other provisions or parts not affected thereby shall remain valid and effective.

SECTION 7. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 8. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,