COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1228

Submitted by the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms on September 18, 2021

Re : House Resolution No. 2231

Recommending its adoption in substitution of House Resolutions Numbered 2128 and 2139

Sponsors : Representatives Juliet Marie de Leon Ferrer, Sarah Jane I. Elago, and Edgar R. Erice

Mr. Speaker:

The Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms, to which was referred the following House Resolutions:

House Resolution No. 2124 introduced by Representatives Sarah Jane I. Elago, France L. Castro, Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, Ferdinand R. Gaite, Eufemia C. Cullamat, and Arlene D. Brosas, entitled:

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

and


“RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION FROM SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 TO OCTOBER 31, 2021 TO PREVENT VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC”

has considered the same and recommends that the attached House Resolution No. 2231, entitled:
RESOLUTION
URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD TO PREVENT VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN VIEW OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ADOPTED TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE


Respectfully submitted:

HON. JULIET MARIE DE LEON FERRER
Chairperson
Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms
Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2231


RESOLUTION

URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD TO PREVENT VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN VIEW OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ADOPTED TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) is constitutionally-mandated to “enforce and administer all laws and regulations relative to the conduct of an election, plebiscite, initiative, referendum, and recall” and has the power to determine periods to accomplish pre-election activities such as voter registration;

WHEREAS, registration is part and parcel of the right to vote and an indispensable element in the election process;

WHEREAS, under Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 or the Voter’s Registration Act of 1996, the COMELEC is mandated to establish a system of continuing registration of voters, which activity shall cease one hundred twenty (120) days before a regular election and ninety (90) days before a special election;

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, COMELEC suspended voter registration starting March 10, 2020 due to COVID-19, and after a series of extensions, voter registration was suspended until August 31, 2020 which approximately covered a period of more than five and a half months, or 28.3% of the entire registration period;
WHEREAS, on August 12, 2020, the COMELEC promulgated COMELEC Resolution No. 10674 which suspended registration in many areas placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) status, affecting major urban centers such as Metro Manila, Cavite, Rizal, Laguna, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, and other places at different periods, each period lasting at least two weeks;

WHEREAS, based on reports from different migrant workers groups, many Filipinos in the diaspora continue to face registration issues since Philippine embassies and consulates worldwide have very limited time to accommodate registrants;

WHEREAS, the same migrant workers groups reported that registering as overseas voters entails exorbitant costs since they are required to present themselves for biometrics capture in Philippine embassies and consulates which sometimes are located in areas far from their place of work, or in another country which thus requires travel and lodging;

WHEREAS, in the meeting of the Senate Committee on Electoral Reforms and People’s Participation meeting on February 18, 2021, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the projected voting population for the 2022 national and local elections is at 73.3 million;

WHEREAS, as of June 2021, the COMELEC reported that there are only around 60 million registered voters, indicating therefore that around 13 million Filipinos here and abroad remain unregistered;

WHEREAS, while the COMELEC needs ample time to prepare the final list of voters which is a prerequisite for the preparation of the Project of Precincts (POP), extending the deadline for voters registration will neither unduly hamper nor delay the COMELEC’s preparation of the POP as in fact, the voters registration period in previous national and local elections extended at least until October 31:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National and Local Elections</th>
<th>Voter Registration Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>December 27, 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>October 31, 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>December 31, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>January 09, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>October 31, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>October 31, 2015</td>
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</tbody>
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WHEREAS, the Supreme Court recognized COMELEC’s power to set the deadline of voter’s registration provided that no registration may be done during the period starting one hundred twenty (120) days before a regular election¹;
WHEREAS, the setting of the September 30, 2021 voter’s registration deadline by
the COMELEC did not anticipate the adverse impact of the pandemic which led to
many eligible voters unable to register;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the
House of Representatives urge the Commission on Elections to extend the deadline
for voter registration in the country and abroad to prevent voter disenfranchisement
in view of the health and safety measures and travel restrictions adopted to prevent
the spread of the coronavirus disease.

Adopted,