

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1488



Introduced by: Hon. Angelina "Helen" D.L. Tan, M.D.

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING FOR QUALIFIED SENIOR CITIZENS IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article V, Section 1 of the Philippine Constitutions provides that, "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 requirement shall be imposed on the exercise of suffrage."

The right to suffrage is the essence of our democracy. As a means to increase participation by citizens who are otherwise prevented to vote, the country has enacted absentee voting laws. Presently, there are laws that allow absentee voting for Filipinos overseas, media practitioners, armed forces and police force. However, these still leave another group disenfranchised due to age-related conditions during elections.

Senior citizens have a significant role to play and contribution to make in the transformation of our country towards a more just, fair and humane society. Our elderly have the treasure of wisdom, knowledge, values and experience that they can share with us, most especially with the younger generation of Filipinos. As such, it is important to ensure that their voices will be heard and their voted will be counted during elections. However, some of them may not be able to vote as they are stationed away from their residences on election days either to seek treatment or due to elderly health issues and conditions among other reasons.

Hence, this bill provides for means for senior citizens stationed away from their residences on election days to vote on national elections in the precincts nearest to them subject to reasonable regulations by the Commission on Election.

In view thereof, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Al Tan".

ANGELINA "HELEN" D.L. TAN, M.D.
4th District, Quezon

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the 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 by giving them the option to vote earlier than the date set for the election.

SEC. 2. *Early Voting.* - For national and local elections, there shall be early voting where senior citizens qualified to vote early 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 election.

SEC. 3. *Registration.* - There shall be nationwide registration for senior citizens who may wish to avail of their early voting privileges to qualify them for early voting. Those who are not registered under this Act shall vote on Election Day.

SEC. 4. *Obligations of the COMELEC.* - To ensure the smooth implementation of this Act, the COMELEC shall:

- (a) Keep a record of senior citizens who are registered voters;
- (b) In coordination with local government units, the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Health and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, design a registration system that shall allow senior citizens to register and opt for early voting in order to improve their voting experience in national and local elections;
- (c) Ensure the full implementation of 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", such that polling places are safe, highly accessible and fitted with the necessary communication, visual and physical aids; and
- (d) Mount an intensive information campaign on early voting by qualified senior citizens.

SEC. 5. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to fund early voting by qualified senior citizens in national and local elections shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 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 the early voting by qualified senior citizens.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the COMELEC shall, in consultation with other relevant government and nongovernment agencies, promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,