



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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PRESS RELEASE

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NAMFREL releases pre-plebiscite day observations on the 2022 Ormoc Plebiscite

The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) having been accredited by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) as citizens' arm presents its pre-plebiscite day observations on the Ormoc Plebiscite to be held on Saturday, October 8, 2022 to ratify City Ordinance No. 052 Series of 2021 merging 28 barangays into 3 and renaming one barangay.

A YES vote in the Plebiscite will lead to the merger of Barangay Districts 14, 20, 21, 22, 19, 26, and 24 into Barangay West; Districts 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 25, and 28 into Barangay East; Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 17, 23, and 27 into Barangay South; and the renaming of District 29 to Barangay North. There are 10,209 registered voters expected to participate in the Plebiscite.

For the plebiscite, NAMFREL deployed a three-member Election Expert Mission (EEM) to look into the issues surrounding the plebiscite, as well as to observe the process on plebiscite day. The members of the mission are NAMFREL National Chairperson Angel S. Averia, Jr. (Lito Averia), NAMFREL National Council Member Corazon H. Ignacio, and NAMFREL Tacloban City Chairperson Dr. Flordeliz B. Dacuyan from University of the Philippines Visayas, Tacloban College.

The NAMFREL EEM team has met with various stakeholders including a member of the Sangguniang Panglungsod, the City Government, the President of the Liga ng mga Barangay, majority of the Chairpersons of the barangays involved, the Ormoc City COMELEC, and other organizations.

Here are some findings of the NAMFREL mission so far:

- The City Government invited the Department of Interior and Local Government and Department of Budget and Management in the crafting of City Ordinance No. 052.
- The City Government and the COMELEC have satisfied the administrative, legal, and reportorial requirements for the conduct of the Plebiscite.
- Concerned citizens were informed of the issues through barangay assemblies, social media, radio, and flyers.
- There is a strong campaign conducted by the proponents for a YES vote with a main message "to bring government closer to the people, making basic and quality services readily available, responsive, and efficient."
- On the other hand, there are no visible proponents for a NO vote.

- The concerns of the NO votes are 1) loss of jobs of the incumbent, 2) unfamiliarity with the new structure, and 3) over promising the benefits of the merged barangays.
- Adequate security is in place, including involvement of force multipliers and medical teams.
- Whatever the result of the plebiscite, the incumbent barangay officials will continue to serve until the next barangay elections, hence, there will be no disruption of barangay services.
- The City Treasurer's Office, following proper procedures, unsealed the Plebiscite ballots and other accountable forms duly observed by representatives of the COMELEC, the Philippine National Police, the Department of Education, Offices of the Mayor and Vice Mayor, Sangguniang Panglungsod, and NAMFREL.

The plebiscite day has not been declared a holiday which could affect the turnout of voters who may have places of work in other areas of the city or outside of the city.

NAMFREL will observe the entire process of the Plebiscite and will be submitting a final report to the COMELEC on the findings of the observation, identifying areas that could be further strengthened, and recommending measures to help ensure the conduct of safer and more efficient electoral exercises. ###