



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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NAMFREL urges Congress to rethink the voter registration process

In a report on its observation of the recently concluded resumption of voter registration, submitted to the COMELEC on August 10 and a copy of which was sent to the Senate and the House of Representatives, NAMFREL urges Congress to amend current laws or pass new laws to fundamentally change the country's voter registration process. NAMFREL's recommendations to the Legislature are the following:

- **Allow data sharing agreements between the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the Comelec in order to dispense with the voter registration process.** This would save time and costs not only for the local Comelec offices but also for would-be voters who have to line up even before the sun has risen just to be able to submit their applications. The Legislature may study and adopt the system used in Indonesia, where the government is mandated to provide data on the population of potential election voters to be used by the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU) for compiling the voters list. The data given to KPU comes from people registered in the electronic Resident Identification Card (e-KTP) scheme, the Indonesian national ID system;
- **Require the PSA and the Civil Registrars nationwide to submit to the COMELEC the information on deceased persons so that they can be purged from the voter registration database;**
- **Allow data on citizens turning 15 years old for purposes of the SK elections, and 18 years old for purposes of regular elections, plebiscites, referenda, etc., to be shared by the Civil Registrars with COMELEC.** This and the previous recommendation would be subject to Data Sharing Agreements in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act;
- **Repeal "Any person who did not vote in the two (2) successive preceding regular elections as shown by their voting records" as a ground for deactivation under Section 27 of Republic Acts No. 8189 (for local voters) and 9189, as amended by R.A. 10590 (for overseas voters).** Voters should not be penalized for the failure to exercise their right to choose our leaders, and then line up before sunrise to apply for reactivation. Instead, they should be encouraged to vote through the adoption of voting technology (for example, Internet voting) and/or mechanisms (polling places close to their residences), and enlightened on the importance of their choice and how they can exercise it. If the reason for including failure to vote as a ground for deactivation is that those who failed to vote may have done so because of death, this would be addressed by the PSA and the Civil Registrars nationwide submitting information on deceased persons to the Comelec.

NAMFREL believes that these measures will greatly help make the voter registration process more efficient, less costly, and more convenient for Filipinos.

Twenty NAMFREL chapters across the country observed the voter registration process from July 4 to 23, 2022. The observers were guided by an observation form containing questions based on Comelec's published guidelines for the resumption of voter registration (COMELEC Resolution No. 10798). Critical information that were gleaned from the observation activity were: enforcement and adherence to health and safety protocols; physical characteristics of COMELEC offices / registration centers; number of registrants; and total time spent by registrants inside the registration centers. Some specific activities monitored in the registration centers were entry procedures, the registration proper, adherence to health and safety guidelines, and the registration environment.

Besides NAMFREL volunteers' findings, the submitted report also contains administrative recommendations to the Comelec to help further enhance future voter registration activities and the preparations for the holding of the 2022 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE). The recommendations include stricter implementation of health protocols, further training of personnel on procedures as prescribed in Comelec guidelines, implementation of measures to further decongest registration centers including the use of an appointments system, and further exploration of more ways to conduct registration activities remotely or electronically, among others.

Read the NAMFREL report here: <https://bit.ly/NAMFREL VoterRegReport22>

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