



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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PRESS RELEASE
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COMELEC should disclose AES spending to the public *As mounting concerns grow regarding use of funds*

The National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) calls on the COMELEC to exercise transparency and accountability by fully disclosing the funds it has thus far spent for the 2010 elections. The budget for the 2010 elections has been set at at least P16.5 billion – P11.3 billion for the Automated Election System (under RA 9525 “An Act Appropriating the Sum of P 11,301,790,000.00 As Supplemental Appropriations for an Automated Election System and Other Expenses” signed into law on March 23, 2009) plus the P 5.21 billion appropriation for the “Automated National and Local Elections” under RA 9970, The General Appropriations Act of 2010. The latter figure represents the regular allocation in the national budget every three years (i.e., 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010) for election expenses.

This is in reaction to the undue haste or “*lapses*”, as COMELEC Chairman Jose Melo stated in his explanation of the oversight of the price of the ballot secrecy folders, accommodation of no penalties to Smartmatic for late deliveries, propensity for awarding contracts without bidding, and appalling disregard for rules on prudent spending that the election body has been engaging in.

Another reason for the concern is the generous provision of Section 44 of RA 9369 or the Automated Election Law which states “*If the said funds shall not be fully utilized, the same shall continue to be appropriated for the electoral modernization as set forth in this Act and shall not revert to the General Fund.*”

Based on Namfrel’s Bantay ng Bayan research, some of the big spending items so far are the following:

- P 243 million for approximately 77,000 ballot boxes awarded to Smartmatic International Corp. without bidding on February 1, 2010 (P 3,155 per box).
- P 28 million for 80,000 units of handheld portable UV lamps award to OTC Paper Corp after failed bidding on March 26, 2010. The lamps were required after the UV lamps on the PCOS machines were disabled following the use of the wrong UV ink for ballot printing.
- P 75.6 million to Texas Resources Corp. on March 29, 2010 for 720,000 bottles of indelible ink (P 105.00 per bottle).
- P 499.1 M to Smartmatic International Corp. on March 24, 2010 for Trucking and Delivery Services of Official Ballots for the May 10, 2010 Automated Elections.
- P 519 M to Smartmatic International Corp. on March 2, 2010 for Procurement of Ballot Box Transportation with PCOS machines to all polling centers nationwide.
- P 1.5 B to Unison Joint Venture on August 26, 2009 for the Cleansing of Computerized Voters List Project (Validation and Data Capture System for P 299,996,400.00, On-Line Data Submission and Synchronization System for P 49,995,060.42, AFIS and AFIS Server Applications for P 999,995,178.00 and Voter ID Card Generation for P 249,999,846.00). The COMELEC is spending P 1.5 B for a Certified Voters List that has been estimated to contain 3 million unauthorized voters.
- P 2.1 million to Copylandia Office Systems Corp on April 5, 2010 for 9 units of copying machines (P 234,000.00 per unit)
- P 174.2 M to Noah’s Paper Mills, Inc. on February 18, 2010 for Storage and Working Area Logistics (Leased Racking System, Pallets and Lifters) (breakdown can be found at http://www.comelec.gov.ph/invi2bid/2010/award/notice_of_award_noahs_paper_mills.html)

The public needs to know. The public has the right to know. The public invokes Sec. 28 of the Constitution’s Declaration of Principles: “*Subject to reasonable conditions prescribed by law, the State adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest.*”

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