NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

23 MAY 29 A11 :43

RECEIVED BY:

SENATE

S. No. 2254

Introduced by Senator MARK A. VILLAR

AN ACT
ENABLING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO ESTABLISH AN AUTOMATED AND ONLINE SYSTEM FOR VOTER REGISTRATION, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to suffrage or the right to vote, which is enshrined in our Constitution, is an essential attribute of a democratic country like the Philippines. It enables the people to participate in the process of government in order to assure that its powers are derived from the consent of the governed.

Before one can exercise one's right to vote, one must first be registered to the local Commission on Elections (COMELEC) offices. Yet, registration appears to be a time-consuming and exhausting process, and could be the main reason why many qualified citizens are deterred from registering, rendering them unable to participate during the elections.

Thus, to encourage citizens to register, this bill seeks to enable COMELEC, as far as practicable, to adopt, design, and use an automated and online system for voter registration. This will cover the electronic and online filing and processing of the application for registration, transfer of registration, reactivation, correction of voter registration entries, and such other requests and processes relative to the voter's registration and records.

These will result to more efficient, convenient, and accessible registration process, which will undoubtedly encourage more qualified citizens to participate in the electoral process.

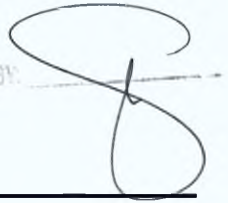In view of the foregoing, the passage of the bill is earnestly sought.

MARK A. VILLAR

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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1   Section 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to establish a

2   system of registration that ensures and guarantees a clean, complete, permanent, and

3   updated list of voters. To encourage and ensure a continuing system of voter

4   registration, the State shall adopt and make use of technologies that shall facilitate

5   and allow the automated and online registration of voters, taking into account the

6   integrity, completeness, and accuracy of the list of voters.

7   Sec. 2. *Automated and Online Voter Registration System.* – The Commission on

8   Elections (COMELEC) shall, as far as practicable, adopt, design, and use an automated

9   and online system for voter registration that enables the electronic and online filing

10   and processing of the application for registration, transfer of registration, reactivation,

11   correction of voter registration entries, and such other requests and processes relative

12   to the voter's registration and records.

13   The COMELEC shall also endeavor to use the same automated and online

14   system for the verification and approval of application for voter registration, transfer

15   of registration, reactivation, correction of voter registration entries, and such other

16   requests and processes relative to the voter's registration and records as may be

practicable, bearing in mind the State's policy of ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the voters list and records.

Sec. 3. *Automated and Online Verification.* – Where online verification of the application or request is not feasible in the meantime, the system shall nonetheless allow the applicant to submit his or her application or request through the COMELEC's online platform. The same application and the information contained therein, including the demographics of the applicant, shall be processed electronically and shall be automatically stored in the COMELEC database for pending voter registration application or requests.

The system shall promptly provide the applicant with complete and detailed information as to the steps required to complete the application or request.

Sec. 4. *Personal Filing.* – The automated and online filing of application for voter registration shall not preclude the personal filing of applications for registration, transfer of registration, reactivation, correction of voter registration entries, and such other requests, which shall continue to be available and conducted in the office of the Election Officer during office hours.

Sec. 5. *Automated and Electronic Notice of Approval or Disapproval* – The automated and electronic system of voter registration shall include a feature that automatically informs the applicant of the successful submission of his or her application or request. The system shall provide detailed instructions on how the applicant may follow up or complete the application for registration or requests, the estimated time to complete the processing of the application or request, details on the notice of approval or disapproval of the application and requests, further remedies available in case of disapproval, and such other information necessary to promptly assist the applicant with his or her application or request.

Sec. 6. *Secure Internet Website and Online Platforms.* – The COMELEC shall design, devise, adopt, or otherwise use a secure Internet Website or online platform where such applications may be filed by voters and/or applicants. Security measures shall be put in place to protect and guarantee the completeness, accuracy, and

integrity of voter registration forms, applications, and information submitted and filed through such Internet Website or online platform.

Sec. 7. *Automatic Registration* - Within ten (10) years from the effectivity of this Act, the COMELEC shall implement a program wherein persons registered under the existing National ID Program shall be automatically registered as voter of the place of their declared residence upon reaching the allowable voting age.

Sec. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The COMELEC, in coordination with the appropriate government agencies, including the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations within ninety (90) from the effectivity of this Act.

Sec. 9. *Appropriation.* – The amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act shall be included in the budget of the COMELCE in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 10. *Separability Clause* – Any portion or provisions of this Act that may be declared unconstitutional or invalid shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or provisions hereof as long as such remaining portions or provisions can still subsist and be given effect in their entirety.

Sec. 11. *Repealing Clause* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, memoranda, circulars, rules and regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Sec. 12. *Effectivity Clause* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,