

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Second Regular Session**

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23 JUL 26 P1 :10

SENATE
S.B. No. 2362

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

**AN ACT
ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY IN THE VOTING OF SENIOR CITIZENS, PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES, PREGNANT WOMEN, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10366, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Casting one's vote is a basic right in any democracy. Thus, the State must devise every possible way to make voting accessible to all. Senior citizens, persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, and indigenous peoples are among the sectors who, in one way or another, find it particularly more challenging and difficult to exercise suffrage on election day. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), in its 2021 Philippine Statistics Population Projection, pegs the number of senior citizens at 9,863,192; registered PWDs at 1,732,296; and indigenous peoples at 9,229,762. The University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) estimates the number of pregnant women at an average of 2 million at any given time. Clearly, these numbers are significant especially in elections.

Upholding the fundamental principle of social justice which is espoused by the no less than the Constitution, this bill seeks to provide these sectors an option for early voting. This will somehow alleviate the difficulties that they usually encounter on the actual election day when polling precincts are deluged with thousands of voters. The long queues under the scorching heat of the sun, poses a heavier burden on them who are already mostly physically challenged. They have vulnerabilities which make

it imperative that the State protect them and help them so that such they would not be the cause of their disenfranchisement.

Along with the option of early voting, this bill also seeks to enhance the existing Accessible Polling Places (APPs) and Emergency Accessible Polling Places (EAPPs).

In this light, consideration of this bill is earnestly sought.


RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

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

1 **Section 1. Declaration of Policy.** – The State shall ensure that senior citizens,
2 persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, and indigenous peoples (IPs) are
3 able to exercise their right to political participation without restrictions. The State shall
4 devise systems and procedures that will enhance accessibility in their voting process.

5
6 **Sec. 2. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act, the term:

7
8 a. “Commission” refers to the Commission on Elections;

9 b. “Senior Citizens” refer to qualified voters who are sixty (60) years or
10 older;

11 c. “Persons with Disabilities” or “PWDs” refer to qualified voters who have
12 long term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in
13 interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full effective participation in
14 society on an equal basis with others;

1 d. "Pregnant women" refer to qualified voters who are pregnant at the time
2 of the period for early voting and during election day regardless of the number
3 of trimester;

4 e. "Indigenous peoples" refer to qualified voters who belong to a group of
5 people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and by others, who
6 have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and
7 defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time
8 immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common
9 bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or
10 who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of
11 colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, social and cultural inroads
12 of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically
13 differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. IPs shall likewise include peoples
14 who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the
15 populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or
16 colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures,
17 or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of
18 their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have
19 been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled
20 outside their ancestral domains;

21
22 **Sec. 3. *Early Voting.*** – For national and local elections, there shall be early
23 voting where senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant women, and IPs qualified to vote early
24 may choose to cast their ballot for a period of not less than two (2) days within thirty
25 (30) calendar days before election day at accessible establishments designated by the
26 Commission.

27
28 For this purpose, accessible establishments shall be located at the ground floor,
29 preferably near the entrance of a building, shall be readily accessible to public
30 transportation, and shall be free of any physical barriers and provided with necessary
31 infrastructure and disability support services, including assistive devices, transport

1 wheelchairs, ramps, railings, sidewalk, adequate lighting, ventilation, and other
2 features for the senior citizens, PWDs, and pregnant women.

3 Aside from structural accessibility, the Commission shall provide live assistance
4 for PWDs such as sign language interpreters.

5

6 There shall be nationwide registration of senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant
7 women, and IPs who may wish to avail of their early voting privileges to qualify them
8 for early voting. Only those who are not registered under the early voting system shall
9 vote on election day.

10

11 **Sec. 4. *Option for Postal Early Voting.*** – Senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant
12 women, and IPs who registered for early voting shall have the option to cast their
13 ballot via post in designated precincts: *Provided*, That voters who wish to vote via post
14 must first be registered to do so with the Commission.

15

16 The Commission shall provide rules, necessary safeguards, and confirmation
17 procedures to properly implement this provision.

18

19 **Sec. 5. *Emergency Accessible Polling Places (EAPP).*** – During election day, the
20 Commission shall designate a room or a makeshift or temporary polling place
21 established at the ground of a voting center or outside of it but in close proximity
22 thereto, where senior citizens, PWDs and pregnant women voters may vote on election
23 day.

24

25 The Commission shall ensure that the voting procedure in the EAPP, including
26 the facilities, materials, and a voting machine in the event of automated elections, are
27 adequate, appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand and use, and that
28 reasonable accommodation shall be granted to PWDs, senior citizens, and pregnant
29 women in order that they may fully exercise their right of suffrage. The Commission
30 shall provide live assistance for PWDs such as sign language interpreters.

31

1 **Sec. 6.** Section 2(j) of Republic Act No. 10366 is hereby amended to read as
2 follows:

3
4 "SEC. 2. *Definition of Terms.* – XXX

5 a. XXX

6 XXX

7 (j) *Accessible polling place* refers to the venue where the Board
8 of Election Inspectors (BEIs) conducts election-related
9 proceedings and where the voters cast their votes. The
10 accessible polling place shall be located at the ground floor,
11 preferably near the entrance of the building, **SHALL BE**
12 **READILY ACCESSIBLE TO PUBLIC**
13 **TRANSPORTATION,** and [is] **SHALL BE** free of any physical
14 barriers and provided with necessary **INFRASTRUCTURE AND**
15 services, including assistive devices, **TRANSPORT**
16 **WHEELCHAIRS, RAMPS, RAILINGS, SIDEWALKS,**
17 **ADEQUATE LIGHTING, VENTILATION, AND OTHER**
18 **FEATURES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND**
19 **SENIOR CITIZENS"**

20
21 **Sec. 7.** Section 9 of Republic Act No. 10366 is hereby amended to read as
22 follows:

23 "Sec. 9. [~~Creation of~~] *Precincts for Persons with Disabilities*
24 *and Senior Citizens.* – The Commission is hereby authorized to
25 [~~establish~~] **DESIGNATE** precincts [~~of a nonterritorial nature,~~] **IN**
26 **ACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES FOR THE** exclusive[~~ly for~~]
27 **USE OF** persons with disabilities and senior citizens [~~who in their~~
28 registration records manifest their intent to avail of their right to
29 a separate precinct under this section. Pursuant hereto, the
30 Commission shall establish at least one (1) such precinct,
31 assigned to accessible polling places, for every voting center,]
32 **SUCH AS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, TOWN HALLS OR PLAZAS,**

1 **CIVIC CENTERS, COMMUNITY CENTERS, OR OTHER**
2 **SIMILARLY DESIGNATED SPECIAL VENUES OR AREAS,**
3 **WITH PREFERENCE FOR VENUES DESIGNED WITH**
4 **SPECIAL FEATURES TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AND**
5 **COMFORT.** Such precincts shall be provided with assistive
6 devices **PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 2(J)**
7 **OF THIS ACT** as well as the services of experts in assisting
8 persons with disabilities, **SUCH AS SIGN LANGUAGE**
9 **INTERPRETERS.**

10
11 **Sec. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days from
12 approval of this Act, the Commission shall, in consultation with other relevant
13 government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations,
14 promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

15
16 **Sec. 9. *Appropriations.*** – The initial appropriation to carry out the provisions of
17 this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Commission.
18 Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall
19 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

20
21 **Sec. 10. *Separability Clause.*** – Should any provision of this Act or part hereof
22 be declared unconstitutional, the other provisions or parts not affected thereby shall
23 remain valid and effective.

24
25 **Sec. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances or
26 portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby
27 repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

28
29 **Sec. 12. *Effectivity.*** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
30 publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.