

SENATE

P.S.R. No. 497

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Introduced by Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III

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A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS  
AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN  
AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE FEASIBILITY OF CONDUCTING  
OVERSEAS REGISTRATION AND VOTING VIA INTERNET OR  
ELECTRONIC MAIL

**WHEREAS**, *Article V, Section 2* of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the Congress shall provide a system for securing the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot as well as a system for absentee voting by qualified Filipinos abroad;

**WHEREAS**, *Section 23* of *Republic Act No. 10590*, otherwise known as *The Overseas Voting Act of 2013*, provides that overseas voting may be done either personally, by mail, or by any other means as may be determined by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC);

**WHEREAS**, in the Press Release dated May 21, 2013 of Senate President Franklin M. Drilon, it was disclosed that out of 737,759 overseas registered voters, only 113,209 actually voted during the May 2013 elections with a voters turnout of 15.35%, which is lower than the voters turnout of 26% during the May 2010 elections;<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, COMELEC Chairman Sixto S. Brillantes, Jr., in reaction to Senate President Drilon's Press Release, mentioned that the voters deem it impractical to go to the embassy or consulate to vote.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he noted that voters' interest is also historically low during midterm elections;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Senate of the Philippines. Retrieved from: [http://www.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2013/0521\\_drilon1.asp](http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2013/0521_drilon1.asp); Retrieved on: February 5, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Philippine Daily Inquirer. Retrieved from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/413067/comelec-eyes-internet-voting-for-filipino-voters-abroad>; Retrieved on: February 5, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Philippine Star. Retrieved from: <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/05/22/944884/drilon-comelec-dfa-explain-low-oav-turnout>; Retrieved on: February 6, 2014.

**WHEREAS**, it was reported by the Philippine Daily Inquirer that although postal voting was allowed in almost all European centers, a number of Overseas Filipino Workers complained they did not receive their election ballot in the mail due to a change in address;<sup>4</sup>

**WHEREAS**, COMELEC Commissioner Lucenito N. Tagle conveyed that internet voting is a better alternative because it will no longer be necessary for the overseas voters to leave their place of work just to vote.<sup>5</sup> Chairman Brillantes also expressed that internet voting could increase the turnout by 60% to 70%;<sup>6</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Atty. Rodel Rodis, President of Global Filipino Diaspora Council (GFDC), an organization of overseas Filipinos, stated that GFDC is still lobbying for internet voting to make it easy for overseas Filipinos to vote and thus achieve a higher voters' turnout;<sup>7</sup>

**WHEREAS**, one of the causes of low voters turnout is low voters registration. The number of registered overseas Filipino voters (737,759) pales in comparison to the 11 million Filipino workers abroad;<sup>8</sup>

**WHEREAS**, it was determined that the factors negatively affecting voters registration are: geographical location of voters vis-à-vis the registration centers, apathy, high mobility of overseas Filipinos, limited manpower in embassies and consulates, insufficient information campaign, and incorrect addresses provided by voters, unresolved issues with the several voting methods which resulted in the voters being unable to exercise their right to vote, the focus on increasing voter registration but no plans on how to increase voter turnout, and expanded postal voting without addressing wastage of postal ballots;<sup>9</sup>

**WHEREAS**, Victor Barrios of Global Filipino Nation and Tony Villegas of US Pinoys for Good Governance recommended registering and voting via internet to save on costs and to address the challenges of high mobility and distance;<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Philippine Daily Inquirer. Retrieved from: <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/74917/overseas-voting-turnout-very-low>; Retrieved on: February 6, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, note 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Supra*, note 2.

<sup>7</sup> Commission on Filipino Overseas. Retrieved from: [http://www.cfo.gov.ph/index.php?Option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1923;fil-am-group-triumphant-in-the-reinstatement-of-overseas-filipino-voters&catid=109:overseas-filipino-new&Itemid=840](http://www.cfo.gov.ph/index.php?Option=com_content&view=article&id=1923;fil-am-group-triumphant-in-the-reinstatement-of-overseas-filipino-voters&catid=109:overseas-filipino-new&Itemid=840); Retrieved on: February 6, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> NAMFREL. Retrieved from: <http://www.namfrel.com.ph/v2/news/bulletin-v2n22-overseas.php>; Retrieved on: February 6, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Id.

<sup>10</sup> Id.

**WHEREAS**, since it is the prime duty of the State to provide a system of honest and orderly overseas voting that upholds the secrecy and sanctity of the ballot, Congress has continuously exerted efforts to improve our overseas voting system as shown by the immediate passage of The Overseas Voting Act of 2013;

**WHEREAS**, considering Congress' efforts to improve overseas voting and the public clamor for internet voting and registration by the overseas Filipino community, Congress is duty-bound to design laws that will improve the current overseas voting system to ensure overseas voters turnout by all qualified citizens of the Philippines abroad in the exercise of said fundamental right;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE PHILIPPINE SENATE THAT THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION, BE DIRECTED TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE FEASIBILITY OF CONDUCTING OVERSEAS REGISTRATION AND VOTING VIA INTERNET OR ELECTRONIC MAIL.**

*Adopted,*

  
AQUILINO "KOKO" PIMENTEL III