

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

14 NOV 26 P 6 35

SENATE
S. No. 2472

RECEIVED BY: *ji*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

AN ACT
INTEGRATING VOTER EDUCATION IN THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH
SCHOOL CURRICULA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 13 provides:

The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs.

Article 14, Section 3 (2) further provides:

[All educational institutions] shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster love of humanity, respect for human rights, appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country, teach the rights and duties of citizenship, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character and personal discipline, encourage critical and creative thinking, broaden scientific and technological knowledge, and promote vocational efficiency.

Youth participation in public affairs upholds the democratic ethos of our country.

It is inherent in a democratic country that all citizens participate in decision- and policy-making processes. According to a paper published by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, youth participation is beneficial for the development of the entire community or society, and for the promotion of civic and political life of young people.¹

¹ Heng Seiha, Vong Mun and Chheat Sreang *with the assistance of* Chhuon Nareth (July 2014), "The Enduring Gap: Decentralisation Reform and Youth Participation in Local Rural Governance", CDRI Working Paper Series No. 94 (Phnom Penh: CDRI)

Youth participation helps develop the community primarily because the youth comprise one-third of our country's population. To exclude the youth from the democratic process is to deprive a substantial number of the population of an opportunity to decide on matters affecting not only their interests but those of future generations as well. Aside from contributing to the community, youth participation aids in their individual development. Involvement in public and civic affairs allows them to have a deeper understanding of the rights accorded to them and the duties expected of them. They become more critical of crucial social issues and more capable of addressing them.

It becomes incumbent upon the Legislature to encourage youth participation. Youth participation in the democratic process is promoted by educating the youth of the very foundation of democracy – the right to vote. The United Nations defines voter education as “the dissemination of information, materials and programmes designed to inform voters about the specifics and mechanics of the voting process for a particular election. Voter education involves providing information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included; what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; who the candidates are; and how to file complaints.”²

In a background paper published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, it stated, “Civic education in school and universities needs to be encouraged as a central element to foster the political participation of young people.”³ Educating the youth through formal instruction of the right to vote and of the electoral system that safeguards such is one of the most effective approach to ensure that they are aware of how to contribute to nation-building, and that they act according to such knowledge.

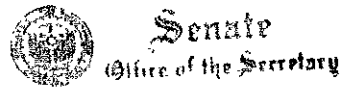
² OSAGI/EAD, “Women and Elections: Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections” (March 2005)

³ “Youth Participation in Politics and Elections”, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance Background Paper, Annual Democracy Forum 2013.

This bill seeks to integrate voter education in the junior and senior high school curricula with the aim of encouraging our students to become active citizens and of arousing their interest in safeguarding the integrity of our electoral system.

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
78

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

4 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as "Compulsory Voter
5 Education Act."

6 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to enlighten
7 citizens on their right to vote and to inculcate in them the duty to preserve the integrity of
8 the electoral process through the educational system.

9 SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act, the term:

10 (A) "Voter education" means dissemination of information, materials and
11 programmes designed to inform citizens about the specifics and mechanics of the voting
12 process. It includes providing information on the right to suffrage, its importance, and the
13 proper exercise thereof, as well as information on who is eligible to vote; where and how
14 to register; how electors can check the voter lists to ensure they have been duly included;
15 what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote; who the candidates
16 are; and how to file complaints.

1 SECTION 4. *Integration of Voter Education in the Junior and Senior High School*
2 *Curricula.* – Voter Education shall be integrated by the Department of Education
3 (DepEd) in the junior and senior high school curricula, effective at the start of the school
4 year immediately following one year from the effectivity of this Act. The Commission on
5 Elections (COMELEC) shall assist DepEd in preparing teachers during the one-year
6 transition period by conducting seminars and trainings on the electoral system and
7 process. COMELEC shall certify that the teacher, after attending such seminars and
8 trainings, is qualified to teach topics relating to the electoral system and process.

9 SECTION 5. *Voter Education Syllabus.* –

10 (A) Voter education. - The main syllabus shall include, but not be limited to, the
11 following thematic areas:

12 (1) Suffrage. - This area introduces to students the right to vote accorded by
13 the Constitution, and other rights enabling citizens to participate in the conduct of
14 public affairs;

15 (2) Electoral system and process. - This area deals with the general
16 principles underlying the present electoral system, and legislation regulating all
17 the phases of election namely, pre-election, election proper, and post-election. It
18 discusses the proper conduct of elections including registration, casting of ballots,
19 and counting of votes;

20 (3) Educated voting – This area focuses on the attitude and behavior a voter
21 must adopt to ensure fair, free, and honest elections. It emphasizes the importance
22 of participating in elections in a manner that shall stimulate and strengthen
23 democracy.

24 (B) Supplementary Topics. - This curriculum should have additional topics and
25 studies on the political system of the country, the contextual background of elections,

1 current political, social, and economic issues affecting the elections, and the possible
2 solutions to address them.

3 (C) Other Subject Matters. - Other areas of voter education may be included in the
4 syllabus.

5 SECTION 6. *Implementing Agency.* - The Secretary of Education is hereby
6 authorized and directed to adopt a system to implement and carry out the provisions of
7 this Act. The Secretary of Education shall, within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of
8 this Act, promulgate the rules and regulations, including those of a disciplinary nature, to
9 carry out and enforce the provisions of this Act.

10 SECTION 7. *Educational Materials.* - It shall be obligatory on all schools offering
11 secondary education to keep in their libraries an adequate number of copies of the
12 textbooks, primers, and leaflets on voter education to be issued by the DepEd. The
13 DepEd shall determine the adequacy of the number of books, depending upon the
14 enrollment of the school.

15 SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid
16 or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall
17 remain valid and subsisting.

18 SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
19 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to,
20 or inconsistent with, the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended
21 accordingly.

1 SECTION 10. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen days (15) days
2 after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,

/tmdp14Nov2014