

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**

Third Regular Session



'19 JAN 15 P3:54

S E N A T E

S. B. No. 2147

RECEIVED

Introduced by Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III

**AN ACT
MAKING ELECTORAL DEBATES MANDATORY,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 7.3 OF
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9006 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"FAIR ELECTION ACT"**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Among the declaration of principles in the Fair Election Act is for the State to guarantee or ensure equal opportunity for public service, pursuant to the Constitution. One way to do this is to allow the candidates to engage each other in a debate where they will be asked to discuss their respective programs of government as well as their stand on the most pressing issues affecting their constituents.

While the Fair Election Act included a provision on the holding of electoral debates, the same was merely permissive. Therefore, this bill seeks to institutionalize the holding of electoral debates by amending the Fair Election Act to make this important activity mandatory. Further, to make the electoral debates more meaningful, the Comelec shall be responsible for sponsoring and supervising the same. Consequently, commercials and advertisements shall no longer be allowed.

Thus, in view of the upcoming elections, the urgent passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


AQUILINO "KOKO" PIMENTEL III

SENATE
S. B. No. 2147

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

1 **SECTION 1.** *Mandatory Electoral Debates.* – Section 7.3 of
2 Republic Act No. 9006 Otherwise Known as The “Fair Election Act” is
3 hereby amended as follows:
4

5 “SEC. 7. *Affirmative Action by the COMELEC.* – xxxxx

6 xxxxx

7 7.3. The COMELEC [may require national television and
8 radio networks to] **SHALL** sponsor **AND SUPERVISE** at
9 least three (3) national debates among presidential candidates
10 and at least one (1) national debate among vice presidential
11 candidates. The debates among presidential candidates shall
12 be scheduled on three (3) different calendar days: the first
13 debate shall be scheduled within the first and second week of
14 the campaign period; the second debate within the fifth and
15 sixth week of the campaign period; and the third debate shall

1 be scheduled within the tenth and eleventh week of the
2 campaign period.

3 **EACH DEBATE SHALL INCLUDE A DISCUSSION OF**
4 **THE CANDIDATES' PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT**
5 **AND THEIR STAND ON THE MOST PRESSING**
6 **ISSUES AFFECTING THEIR RESPECTIVE**
7 **CONSTITUENCIES.**

8 The [sponsoring] television or radio network
9 **BROADCASTING THE DEBATE** may **NOT** sell airtime
10 for commercials and advertisements to interested advertisers
11 and sponsors. The COMELEC shall promulgate rules and
12 regulations for the holding of such debates.”

13 **SEC. 2. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary to carry out the
14 provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General
15 Appropriations Act.
16

17 **SEC. 3. Separability Clause.** – If any part or section of this Act is
18 declared unconstitutional, such declaration shall not affect in any manner
19 the other parts or sections hereof.
20

21 **SEC. 4. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, proclamations,
22 issuances, or ordinances that are contrary to or inconsistent with the
23 provisions of this Act are hereby amended, repealed, or modified
24 accordingly.
25

26 **SEC. 5. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
27 after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general
28 circulation.

Approved,