

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



'22 JUL 12 A9:12

SENATE
Senate Bill No. 308

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III

**AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 185 OF THE OMNIBUS
ELECTION CODE, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO.
7904, BY ABOLISHING THE PRINTING OF THE VOTERS
INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTION SHEET**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Every election period, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) spends millions of pesos in the printing and the sending or mailing of sample ballots, voter information and instruction sheets (VIIS), and lists of candidates which Section 185 of the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines, as amended by Republic Act No. 7904, requires to be furnished to all registered voters.

And with 65,000,000 registered voters, this is a lot of money. And with the advancement of information and communications technology, may be avoided.

All the information which the law intends to be delivered to the individual voter can be done, in a much cheaper way, by taking advantage of mass media, electronic or digital means, and even the common-sense idea of posting these (non-personal) documents conspicuously in public places frequented by the public.

Issues on delayed and incomplete distribution of and errors in the VIIS mar every election. In the May 13, 2019 National and Local Elections, errors in the VIIS were discovered prior to the polls, which made the printing of the National Printing Office, in partnership with a private printing company, a big issue. Former Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon even said it could have caused chaos and possible failure of elections in some areas if the errors were not immediately discovered. Thus, the Comelec *en banc* stopped delivery of the materials before the polls¹, which wasted Php 244,000,000 of the Filipino People's money. In the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections, while some may have had the benefit of receiving the VIIS, many, if not most, of our registered voters still did not see even a shadow of the same.

Recently, with the ballot templates showing the complete list of candidates per region already posted in the Comelec website, and the Elections Precinct Finder website already in place to confirm the voters' status as well as the location of their voting precinct, it is no longer necessary to furnish every voter a printed copy of the VIIS.

The undersigned believes that the national government should find ways to reduce unnecessary expenses and therefore save money. This is one way to do it.

If we can pass this bill into law, then we can start saving hundreds of millions of pesos immediately.

To reduce unnecessary government spending, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.


AQUILINO "KOKO" PIMENTEL III

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections/2019/230706-comelec-guanzon-hits-national-printing-office-voters-information-sheets-mistakes/> Last accessed 19 June 2019.

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

1 **SECTION 1.** Section 185 of the Omnibus Election Code, as
2 amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

3 "SEC. 185. *Official Sample Ballots.* – The Commission shall
4 provide the board of election inspectors with official sample
5 ballots at the rate of thirty (30) ballots per polling place. The
6 official sample ballots shall be printed on colored paper, in all
7 respects like the official ballots but bearing instead the words
8 'Official Sample Ballot' to be shown to the public and used in
9 demonstrating how to fill out and fold the official ballots
10 properly. No name of any actual candidate shall be written on the
11 spaces for voting on the official sample ballots provided by the
12 Commission, nor shall they be used for voting.

13 "At least thirty (30) days before an election, it shall be the duty of
14 the Commission on Elections to [furnish every registered voter
15 through registered mail with return card, personal service with
16 corresponding receipt to be signed by the voter or any person who

1 knows the voter, or any other practicable means with an unfilled
2 official sample ballot, voter information sheet,] **PUBLICIZE**
3 **THE UNFILLED OFFICIAL SAMPLE BALLOT**
4 **THROUGH BROADCAST, DIGITAL, ELECTRONIC OR**
5 **ONLINE MEDIA, AS WELL AS POST THE SAME**
6 **INFORMATION AT CONSPICUOUS PUBLIC AREAS IN**
7 **EVERY BARANGAY DURING THE NATIONAL AND**
8 **LOCAL ELECTIONS, INCLUDING BARANGAY AND**
9 **SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN ELECTIONS, and [a] THE**
10 list of all registered [national, provincial and city] candidateS to
11 be voted in the said election. [The information sheet shall include
12 the voter's name, address, the precinct and the place where he is
13 registered, and simplified instructions as to the casting of votes.]
14 The names of the candidates shall be listed in alphabetical order
15 under their respective party affiliation, **IF ANY** [and a one-line
16 statement not to exceed three (3) words of their occupation or
17 profession]: *Provided, however,* That in the [printing] **POSTING**
18 of the names of the candidates for national offices, the
19 alphabetical order shall be democratized **SUCH THAT NAMES**
20 **OF CANDIDATES ARE SHOWN IN EQUAL**
21 **PROMINENCE.** [so that the listed names shall be made in three
22 (3) columns: the first column shall commence with the letter A
23 and end with the letter Z; the second column shall commence with
24 the letters 'I-Z' and thereafter – 'A-H' and the third column shall
25 commence with the letters 'Q-Z' and thereafter 'A-P'. These
26 information may be contained in a single sheet or booklet form,
27 and the number and location of the voters' polling place shall be
28 prominently indicated therein.] Persons nominated under the
29 party-list system **SHALL** likewise be included in the
30 abovementioned list.”

31 **SEC. 2.** The information to be publicized or posted under Section
32 1 of this Act shall be in any of the official languages of the Republic of
33 the Philippines or in the dialect understood by a majority of the voters
34 in the region where the information is directed.

1 **SEC. 3. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, issuances,
2 rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this
3 Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

4 **SEC. 4. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
5 after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2)
6 newspapers of general circulation.

7 *Approved,*