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OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )



Senate  
Office of the Secretary

13 SEP 18 P4:11

SENATE  
S. No. 1721

RECEIVED BY: *ja*

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21, lays down the basic premises for election rights, recognizing that the conduct of free and fair elections is an integral element of an established democracy.

The Philippines is a democratic and republican State (Constitution, Article 2, Section 1). Its policy is to promote conditions conducive to the conduct of free and fair elections and a climate of democratic tolerance that maintains and develops public confidence in the democratic process as a mechanism for implementing representative government and effecting peaceful change.

Unfortunately, our political process is marred by massive fraud and cheating. Through money and influence, parties and candidates in competition for political power always bend every rule, resort to unlawful means, and seek every advantage in the pursuit of the vote.

Schemes of this sort must be condemned for they constitute immoral acts which are harmful to the democratic process.

Hence, this bill seeks to establish a code of conduct and ethical standards for the political process, to be adhered to by political parties, candidates, political members, sympathizers, voters, election officials, and media practitioners.\*

*Miriam Defensor Santiago*  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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\* This bill was originally filed during the Fourteenth Congress, First Regular Session.



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1 AN ACT  
2 PRESCRIBING A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTIONS

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

3 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Code of Conduct for  
4 Elections."

5 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policies.* - It is the policy of the State to promote conditions  
6 conducive to the conduct of free and fair elections and a climate of democratic tolerance in  
7 which political activity may take place without fear of coercion, intimidation, or reprisals.

8 SECTION 3. *Norms of Conduct of Political Parties, Party Members, Candidates and*  
9 *their Sympathizers.* - Every political party, party member, candidate, and sympathizer shall  
10 observe the following:

11 (A) Existing election laws must be complied with by all registered political parties  
12 and candidates. All registered political parties and candidates must actively encourage their  
13 members and sympathizers to comply with the provisions of existing election laws and must  
14 discipline and restrain them from committing any violations thereof;

15 (B) All registered political parties, political party members, candidates, and  
16 sympathizers shall commit themselves to -

- 17 1. promote free and fair elections;
- 18 2. publicly condemn violence and intimidation;
- 19 3. reject any form of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, class, or religion in  
20 connection with the elections and political party activity; and

1 4. promote accurate information on the electoral processes for these elections;

2 (C) All registered political parties and candidates must promote an atmosphere in  
3 which elections be conducted in a manner that is fair, both during the campaign period and on  
4 polling day. They must cooperate with election officials to ensure peaceful and orderly polling  
5 and complete freedom for the voters to exercise their franchise without being subject to any  
6 annoyance, disturbance, or intimidation;

7 (D) It is expected that criticism of opponents will occur during electioneering.  
8 However, indecorous and provocative speeches, statements, posters, taunting, ridiculing, and  
9 innuendos shall be avoided. All registered parties and candidates shall be careful so that  
10 behavior, statements, or comments do not cause unnecessary tension. They shall exercise  
11 restraint in speech, manner, and conduct, and show respect for the opinion of others so that  
12 electioneering does not turn into a war of words and confrontation. Speeches and slogans shall be  
13 dignified and based on principles of morality, decorum, and decency.

14 (E) All registered political parties and candidates shall act with a sense of  
15 responsibility and dignity befitting their status. While propagating their own views and  
16 programs, they shall not interfere with the freedom of others to do the same, as that would be the  
17 negation of democracy.

18 (F) The congenial and peaceful atmosphere for election must not be disturbed by  
19 spreading untrue and motivated rumor or by taking recourse to conspiracy;

20 (G) On the declaration of a free and fair election by the Commission on Elections to  
21 the satisfaction of the majority of the political parties, invited persons, and recognized observers,  
22 losing candidates shall honorably concede defeat;

23 (H) All registered political parties and candidates shall establish effective  
24 communication with one another at the central, provincial, and district levels and shall appoint  
25 liaison personnel, to be available for this purpose at all times, to deal with any problem arising  
26 during the registration of voters, the campaign, or the polling; and

27 (I) All registered parties and candidates shall ensure that the election will not be  
28 influenced by money, weapons, muscle power, or local influence.

1 SECTION 4. *Prohibited Acts.* - In addition to the acts and omissions prohibited by the  
2 Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines, and other existing laws, rules, and  
3 regulations, the following shall constitute prohibited acts and are hereby declared to be unlawful:

4 (A) All registered political parties and candidates, party members, and sympathizers  
5 shall not engage in practices that are corrupt or violate the integrity of the electoral processes,  
6 such as, but not limited to bribery of votes, intimidation of voters, and inducing a person to vote  
7 knowing that such person is not qualified to vote;

8 (B) All registered political parties, candidates, party members, and sympathizers shall  
9 not create an atmosphere that leads to intimidation and harassment by behaving in such a way  
10 that could incite violence. No party shall give indulgence to any kind of violent activity to  
11 demonstrate party strength or prove supremacy;

12 (C) All registered political parties, candidates, party members, and sympathizers shall  
13 not publish or cause to be published false, inflammatory, or defamatory allegations about the  
14 personal conduct of another party or candidate;

15 (D) All registered political parties, candidates, party members, and sympathizers shall  
16 not indulge in offering gifts or gratification or inducing another to stand, or not stand, as a  
17 candidate, or to withdraw, or not to withdraw, his candidacy;

18 (E) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
19 shall not procure the assistance or support of any public servant or official of the Commission on  
20 Elections to promote or hinder the election of a candidate;

21 (F) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
22 shall not use public funds, premises, vehicles, or other goods;

23 (G) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
24 shall not disrupt or obstruct persons from attending the meetings, marches, or demonstrations of  
25 other parties and candidates;

26 (H) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
27 shall not plagiarize the symbols of other parties, and shall not steal, destroy, or disfigure the  
28 political or other campaign materials of other parties and candidates;

1 (I) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
2 shall not carry dangerous and lethal weapons or any instrument capable of being used as a  
3 weapon in any public meeting, political rally, march, or demonstration;

4 (J) All registered political parties and candidates, their members, and sympathizers  
5 shall not influence voting through money or allurements and hire or use any kind of transport to  
6 carry voters other than for self and family.

7 SECTION 5. *Voters' Norms of Conduct.* - Every voter shall observe the following:

8 (A) It is the individual's fundamental right to vote. A voter shall not abstain from  
9 voting without good reason;

10 (B) All persons eligible to register should seek at all times to be honest with the  
11 information they impart;

12 (C) A voter must not sell his or her vote and not forfeit his freedom of choice and  
13 devalue his or her worth as a person;

14 (D) A voter must exercise his or her responsibility by voting for a candidate on the  
15 basis of ability, integrity, and competence, for integrity, good character, and sound judgment as  
16 manifested in his or her good behavior as a voter is important to the Political Process, and those  
17 whom he or she seeks to elect;

18 (E) A voter shall vote after serious consideration of all candidates' policies. Each  
19 person has a right to his or her views and to support the candidate he or she prefers. Respect must  
20 be maintained for the opinion of others;

21 (F) Each voter has a responsibility to obey the law and to promote the maintenance of  
22 law and order throughout the country.

23 SECTION 6. *Norms of Conduct of Public Officials and Employees of the Commission on*  
24 *Elections and Other Election Officials.* - Every election official or employee shall observe the  
25 following:

1 (A) All election officials must promote conditions conducive to the conduct of free  
2 and fair elections in which the secrecy and integrity of the ballot are respected. All election  
3 officials undertake to:

- 4 1. Refrain from politically influencing any voter;
- 5 2. Perform all duties and functions with care, competence, and courtesy;
- 6 3. Maintain strict impartiality in carrying out duties and functions;
- 7 4. Reject and dissociate themselves from any intimidation, force, sexual harassment,  
8 hostility, injury, disadvantage, or threat of reprisal to any person or damage to any  
9 property that may disrupt or influence the process or result of the elections;
- 10 5. Reject and object to any form of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity,  
11 language, class, or religion in connection with the elections and politics

12 (B) All election officials shall not commit or attempt any act of corruption. Such  
13 activity; acts will include the commission or omission of an act in the performance of or in  
14 connection with one's duties in exchange for money, gift, or promise of reward from any party or  
15 candidate. Election officials shall make every effort to oppose or combat any act of corruption that  
16 is discovered in the course of their duties;

17 (C) Election officials shall make every effort to attend meetings, training classes, or  
18 workshops that are set up to facilitate the carrying out of their functions;

19 (D) All election officials must accept the role of duly appointed representatives of  
20 registered political parties and candidates and their right to object to irregular procedures;

21 (E) During the election period, election officials are forbidden to stand as candidates  
22 or be included on a party list for the elections, work for or be paid by any party or candidate in  
23 connection with the elections, be the holder of an office in a party or wear any apparel or  
24 emblem likely to be associated with any party or candidate;

25 (F) All election officials must not impede political parties from freely conducting  
26 their campaigns. All election officials must maintain the integrity and secrecy of the ballot at all  
27 times and must not interfere directly or indirectly with the exercise of the electoral right of a  
28 person.

1 SECTION 7. *Norms of Conduct of Media Practitioners.* - Freedom of expression by the  
2 media - radio, television, and print - is a symbol of democracy. The manner by which the media  
3 use their freedom carries an obligation to serve the society and public as a whole. Because of this  
4 need to serve the public, the media inherit a public trust. Hence -

5 (A) The media have a responsibility to conduct their operations at all times in a  
6 professional manner and to exercise critical and discerning judgment which respects and  
7 advances the rights and dignity of all people and maintain standards of good taste as reflected by  
8 the society and public served. The media must enrich the daily life of the people they serve  
9 through information, education, and entertainment; they must provide for the fair discussion of  
10 matters of public concern; engage in works directed toward the common good; and volunteer aid  
11 and comfort in times of stress and emergency.

12 (B) News reporting should be factual, fair, and without bias. Professional care should  
13 be maintained in the use and selection of news sources. News analysis, commentary, and  
14 editorials should be clearly identified as such, distinguishing them from straight news reporting.

15 (C) Expressions of responsible views on public issues of a controversial nature should  
16 give fair representation to opposing sides of the issues. Requests by individuals, groups, or  
17 organizations to present their views on controversial public issues should be considered on the  
18 basis of their individual merits and in the light of their contributions to public interest.

19 (D) During the Campaign Period, the media have a special responsibility to the public  
20 to encourage participation by the electorate in the democratic process and to ensure they have the  
21 opportunity to be informed on the candidates and issues.

22 (E) Broadcast or publication errors beyond the control of the medium should be  
23 corrected in accordance with the standard broadcast or publication policies or procedures for the  
24 correction of mistakes. The media may not censor, change, or alter in any manner any of the  
25 materials presented by the parties or candidates for broadcast or publication by the media.

26 (F) In the event any of the media believe a political message may not be in good taste,  
27 or contrary to public interest, security, peace, or morality, the questioned political message may  
28 be rejected by the media.

1           SECTION 8. *Commitment of Parties and Candidates.* - No political party shall be  
2 registered and no candidate for any office shall be issued a certificate of candidacy unless such  
3 party or candidate, under oath, undertakes to abide by this Code of Conduct.

4           SECTION 9. *Penalties.* -

5           (A) Any registered political party which violates any of the prohibited acts  
6 enumerated in Section 4 of this Act shall be suspended from participating in two (2) consecutive  
7 elections or be banned from participating in any electoral process depending on the gravity of the  
8 offense after due notice and hearing by the appropriate body or agency;

9           (B) Any person who violates any of the prohibited acts enumerated in Section 4 of  
10 this Act shall be punished with a fine not exceeding Five Hundred Thousand Pesos  
11 (P500,000.00) after due notice and hearing of the appropriate body or agency, provided that if  
12 the offender is a candidate for public office, he shall also be disqualified from seeking such post.  
13 If the violation is punishable by a heavier penalty under another law, he shall be prosecuted  
14 under the latter statute.

15           SECTION 10. *Promulgation of Rules and Regulations, Administration, and Enforcement.*

16 - The Commission on Elections shall have the primary responsibility for the administration and  
17 enforcement of this Act. It shall transmit all cases of prosecution arising from violations of this  
18 Act to the proper authorities for appropriate action, provided, however, that it may institute such  
19 administrative actions and disciplinary measures as may be warranted in accordance with law.  
20 The Commission is also hereby authorized to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry  
21 out the provisions of this Act.

22           SECTION 11, *Appropriations.* - The sum necessary for the effective implementation of  
23 this Act shall be taken from the appropriations of the Commission on Elections.



1           SECTION 12. *Separability Clause.* - If my provision or part thereof is held invalid or  
2 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain  
3 valid and subsisting.

4           SECTION 13. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive  
5 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent  
6 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

7           SECTION 14. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
8 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,