

SENATE
S. No. 1005

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Introduced by Senator Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III

**AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 185 OF THE OMNIBUS
ELECTION CODE, AS AMENDED, BY ABOLISHING THE
PRINTING OF THE VOTERS INFORMATION AND
INSTRUCTION SHEET**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Every election period, the government, through the Commission on Elections (Comelec), spends millions of pesos in the printing of sample ballots, voter information sheet, and list of candidates to be furnished to all registered voters all over the country and overseas. This is mandated by Section 185 of the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines, as amended by Republic Act No. 7904.

The Voter’s Information Sheet (VIS) or Voters’ Information and Instruction Sheet (VIIS) is a set of documents which contains the voter’s personal information, instructions to vote, and a sample ballot with the list of candidates running in the elections.

The VIIS’ purpose is to help prepare the voters in casting their votes. They would already know how the official ballots look like, who the candidates are, and to what clustered precinct they belong to and will go to when they vote on Election Day.

But does everyone receive the VIIS every election? Issues on delayed and incomplete distribution of and errors in the VIIS

continuously mar every election. In the May 13, 2019 National and Local Elections, errors in the VIS 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. 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 P244 million.

Since 2013, the Comelec decided to stop mailing sample ballots to individual voters and Filipinos now have to resort to the online medium, as well as other means, to satisfy their need for information to vote. Thus, Comelec only mailed voters the VIIS without sample ballots. It, however, contained voters' personal information, instructions to vote, and instructions to access the Comelec website for sample ballots.

Now, 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.

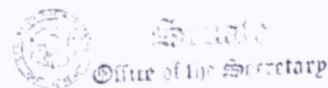
The undersigned believes that the national government should find ways to reduce unnecessary expenses and save on government funds. This is one way to do it.

To reduce government spending in the printing of election-related forms, 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.

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



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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 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 properly.
10 No name of any actual candidate shall be written on the spaces for
11 voting on the official sample ballots provided by the Commission,
12 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
17 knows the voter, or any other practicable means with an] **MAKE**

1 **AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC FOR ONLINE ACCESS**
2 **AND DOWNLOAD** unfilled official sample ballot [, voter
3 information sheet,] and a list of all registered national, provincial
4 and city candidate to be voted in the said election. [The
5 information sheet shall include the voter's name, address, the
6 precinct and the place where he is registered, and simplified
7 instructions as to the casting of votes.] The names of the candidates
8 shall be listed in alphabetical order under their respective party
9 affiliation and a one-line statement not to exceed three (3) words of
10 their occupation or profession: *Provided, however,* That in the
11 [printing] **POSTING** of the names of the candidates for national
12 offices, the alphabetical order shall be democratized so that the
13 listed names shall be made in three (3) columns: the first column
14 shall commence with the letter A and end with the letter Z; the
15 second column shall commence with the letters 'I-Z' and thereafter
16 – 'A-H' and the third column shall commence with the letters 'Q-
17 Z' and thereafter 'A-P'. [These information may be contained in a
18 single sheet or booklet form, and the number and location of the
19 voters' polling place shall be prominently indicated therein.]
20 Persons nominated under the party-list system likewise be included
21 in the abovementioned list.”

22 **SEC. 2. Repeal.** – Provisions of laws relating to the duty of the
23 Commission to furnish every registered voter printed copies of an
24 unfilled official sample ballot, voter information sheet, and a list of
25 candidates including but not limited to, *Republic Act No. 7904*, is hereby
26 repealed.

27 **SEC. 3. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
28 after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general
29 circulation.

30
Approved,