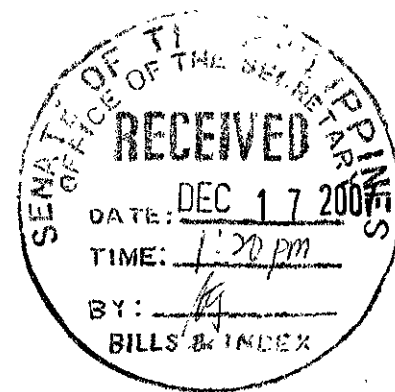


FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)  
OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )



SENATE  
P.S.R. No. 254

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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RESOLUTION DIRECTING AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON CURBING DELIBERATE INACCURACY IN POLITICAL OPINION POLLS, AND DIRECTING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE PHILIPPINE STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION, TO DESIGN A SYSTEM OF ACCREDITATION FOR FIRMS THAT CONDUCT POLITICAL SURVEYS.

WHEREAS, an opinion poll – a survey of opinion from a particular sample – is often used for political ends in this country;

WHEREAS, all opinion polls contain a potential for inaccuracy, because of the following factors: sampling error, nonresponse bias, response bias, wording of questions, and coverage bias, as follows:

1. Sampling error refers to the effects of chance in the sampling process, often expressed as a margin of error, but which does not reflect other sources of error such as measurement of error.

2. Nonresponse bias refers to poll samples that may not be representative samples from a population, because some people do not answer calls from strangers, or refuse to answer the poll.

3. Response bias occurs when answers given by respondents do not reflect their true belief.

4. Wording of questions refers to the order in which questions are asked, the number and form of alternative answers, all of which can influence the results of the poll.

5. Coverage bias refers to the use of samples that are not representative of the population as a consequence of the methodology used.

WHEREAS, opinion polls, when used for political purposes, are impressed with public interest, under established jurisprudence that a business is impressed with public interest when the business has a public character, and is of public consequence and concern. Hence, even if a business is not under any duty to serve the public, if it is affected with public interest, it may be regulated for public good;

WHEREAS, a political opinion poll is in effect a form of advertising covered by the Constitution, Article 16, Section 11 para (2) which provides: “The advertising industry is impressed with public interest, and shall be regulated by law for the protection of consumers and the promotion of general welfare;”

WHEREAS, it is the consensus of experts on opinion polls that key questions on the conduct of the poll include the following:

- Who conducted the poll? Are they reputable and independent?
- How many people were interviewed?
- How were they chosen?
- Are the published results based upon the answers of all those interviewed?
- When was the poll conducted?
- What is the sampling error?
- What questions were asked – and how were they worded? In what order were they asked?
- How do the results of this poll compare with other findings?

WHEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Committee on Public Information and Mass Media, particularly a subcommittee for this purpose, should conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to curb deliberate inaccuracy in published political opinion polls, by requiring such polls to furnish, before publication, answers to the above questions;

BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission on Elections should be directed, with the assistance of the Philippine Statistical Association, to design a system of accreditation among accredited political and electoral opinion survey firms, PSA being the country's one and only association of statistical professionals.

BE IT HEREBY FINALLY RESOLVED, that the law should direct media to observe the enclosed BBC Voluntary Guidelines on Reporting Opinion Polls.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

Encl.:  
BBC Voluntary Guidelines on  
Reporting Opinion Polls.

Copy to:  
Senate Media

## BBC Internal Guidelines on Reporting Opinion Polls

The following rules for reporting the findings of voting intention polls in the United Kingdom conducted by any polling organisation must be applied:

- Do not lead a news bulletin or programme simply with the results of a voting intention poll.
- Do not headline the results of a voting intention poll unless it has prompted a story which itself deserves a headline and reference to the poll's findings is necessary to make sense of it.
- Do not rely on the interpretation given to a poll's results by the organisation or publication which commissioned it. We should look at the questions, the results and the trend.
- Report the findings of voting intention polls in the context of trend. The trend may consist of the results of all major polls over a period or may be limited to the change in a single pollster's findings. Poll results which defy trends without convincing explanation should be treated with particular care.
- Do not use language which gives greater credibility to the polls than they deserve. We should say polls "suggest" but never "prove" or even "show".
- Report the expected margin of error if the gap between the contenders is within the margin. Television and online graphics should always show the margin of error.
- Report the organisation which carried out the poll and the organisation or publication which commissioned it. This information too should always be shown in television and online graphics.
- Report the dates of the fieldwork, and include them in television and online graphics, and draw attention to events which may have had a significant effect on public opinion since it was done.
- Report whether the poll was carried out face to face, by telephone or over the internet.

When we report polls which do not reveal voting intentions we should always give the name of the polling organisation, the sample size, the nature of the sample and as much information about the margin of error and fieldwork dates as feasible.