



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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Press Statement

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NAMFREL ASSESSMENT OF THE MAY 9, 2016 ELECTIONS

The Namfrel Council, led by Chairman David Balangue made an assessment of the May 9 elections during its May 16 and 25, 2016 meetings. The assessment is based on the pre-election, election day and post election day reports of its nation-wide chapters. Namfrel believes that on the whole, this election has been managed far better than the past two automated elections held in 2010 and 2013. Further the electorate seems to have more confidence in the election system this year compared to the past. While there are still some problem areas to look into and to correct, these do not detract from the generally perceived credible and orderly conduct of the May 9 elections.

The most commendable aspect of this election is the highest voter turnout rate ever of 81 % for local and 31 % for overseas voters (versus 76 % and 17 % in 2013 respectively) The top second and third contenders for president conceded within a few days of the elections. Note worthy as well is that all of the Senators and Party List winners were proclaimed at the same time. Other improvements include:

- 1.) Higher rate and quicker transmission of election results which peaked at 96% as of May 12 or three days after the elections;
- 2.) Less incidence of election-related violence than in the previous elections resulting from close coordination amongst the Comelec, PNP and AFP (60 cases vs. 81 in 2013);
- 3.) Improved performance of the vote counting machine with less incidence of ballot rejection, shorter downtime due to malfunction, and insignificant number of reports of discrepancy between the Voters' Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and the actual votes cast; and
- 4.) Better and more responsive Voters' Information and Education initiatives like the three presidential and one vice-presidential debates initiated by Comelec in partnership with media and the clear posters and signages on

How to Vote posted in public areas and in voting centers on election day.

Namfrel notes however the following continuing, persistent, but avoidable inefficiencies like 1.) misdelivery of election paraphernalia from one voting center to another (Negros and Eastern Samar, Saranggani and Marinduque, and Cordova to Dalaguete both in Cebu Province, to name a few), causing delay or the conduct of special elections; 2.) incomplete and inaccurate Computerized Voters' List posted outside the Clustered Precincts, which may have discouraged or disenfranchised voters; and 3.) inadequately trained BEI members who had different implementation of the provisions of the General Instruction, e.g. who will be allowed to assist those with disabilities and the elderly, distribution of the printout of Election Returns to rightful recipients, the Random Manual Audit procedures, etc.

Comelec has likewise been unable to apprehend individuals or parties who committed election offenses. Example of these are posting of campaign banners or posters in unauthorized places, hiring of party agents beyond the authorized number, distribution of campaign materials within 30 meters of the voting center on election day, campaigning by candidates during "The Cooling Day" or election eve; and the most violated rule so far, the prohibition against vote buying. The mock elections conducted were done too late and failed to simulate actual election-day conditions. In spite of budget allocation and award to successful bidders, the distribution of the Voters' Information Sheet (VIS) did not materialize. The VIS would have informed every one of the 54 million registered voters of their assigned precincts. The failure of the VIS distribution should be investigated and the people responsible made accountable. The 100% turnout in command votes in the ARMM particularly in Lanao del Sur and other provinces such as Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Isabela, Aurora, Bohol, Cebu, Western Samar, Leyte, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, Agusan del Norte is statistically improbable and requires immediate investigation by the Comelec and appropriate sanctions imposed.

Candidates should be reminded to strictly comply with the election law and discipline its supporters.

The following are technology issues that cast doubt on the otherwise able management of the elections. Although immediately and subsequently rectified, 2,366 VCMs malfunctioned on election day (2.5 % of 92,509 total number). The transmission of results stalled at 96.69 % as of the writing of this report; and lastly the recent "script issue" when Smartmatic and Comelec personnel effected an alleged unauthorized change which raised doubt to the integrity of the system.

The earlier legal challenges which confronted the COMELEC specifically, the printing of the VVPAT, the qualification of one of the presidential candidates, etc. do not diminish public confidence in the COMELEC. These are but manifestations of a functioning democracy with appropriate checks and balances. Of course there remain lingering and overarching election issues that should be addressed but will need time, legislative action, or more focus for the COMELEC such as political dynasties, uncontested posts, weak political parties, resolution of protest cases, etc. As to campaign finance, Comelec should strictly enforce related rules and regulations.

Namfrel observed that some of the RMA conducted at the municipal level were not strictly in accordance with the guidelines and caused challenges in the verification, appreciation and summarization of the results. The Random Manual Audit Committee comprising of the Comelec, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and Namfrel, in partnership with the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA), is expected to submit its report first week of June.

Also, Namfrel is looking into what appears to be a high percentage of under votes and over votes. After verification of the data, Namfrel will attempt to analyze and evaluate the root causes and implications of the matter.

The final report of Namfrel to the Comelec shall contain more specific details of the above statements.