

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
Third Regular Session

House Resolution No. 2346



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INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES ALAN PETER “COMPAÑERO” S. CAYETANO, MARIA LAARNI L. CAYETANO, LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR., RANEO E. ABU, DAN S. FERNANDEZ, MICHAEL T. DEFENSOR, AND JOSE ANTONIO “KUYA” R. SY-ALVARADO

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**RESOLUTION**

**STRONGLY URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) TO START HOLDING DEBATES BEFORE THE END OF 2021 AMONG THE PRESIDENTIAL, VICE PRESIDENTIAL, AND SENATORIAL ASPIRANTS TO UPHOLD THE PEOPLE’S RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND ACCORD CANDIDATES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD AND TO REPLY, FOR THE PROPER EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE**

**WHEREAS**, the bible teaches us in Proverbs 15:14 that “A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.”;

**WHEREAS**, in the case of *Osmeña v. Commission on Elections*, the Supreme Court emphasized that “discussion of public issues and debate on the qualifications of candidates in an election are essential to the proper functioning of the government established by our Constitution.”

**WHEREAS**, the 1987 Constitution recognizes the right of the people to information on matters of public concern;

**WHEREAS**, the 09 May 2022 National and Local Elections will be the most momentous election to date because no less than the lives and livelihoods of Filipinos, who have been greatly affected by the coronavirus pandemic, will be at stake;

**WHEREAS**, for the month of October 2021 alone, more than 400,000 new voters registered for the upcoming elections and, prior to this, more than five (5) million new voters registered — double the usual average of 1.5 to 2 million — bringing the total number of registered voters in the country to 62 million;

**WHEREAS**, the Honorable Commission is tasked to ensure the meaningful exercise of the right of suffrage of our electorate by helping them make informed choices on election day;

**WHEREAS**, the duty of the COMELEC is not only to ensure that the electorate gets to vote and their votes are counted in a fast and accurate manner, but also “to ensure equal opportunity, time, and space, and the right to reply, including reasonable, equal rates therefor, for public information

campaigns and forums among candidates in connection with the objective of holding free, orderly, honest, peaceful, and credible elections;”<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, holding more debates and starting them earlier is key to informed choices as these debates will give the electorate ample opportunity to examine the candidates’ qualifications, track record, platforms, programs, and stand on issues of national concern;

**WHEREAS**, three (3) presidential debates and one (1) vice presidential debate – like that in the run-up to the 2016 National and Local Elections – are hardly sufficient for our electorate to get to know the candidates, their plans, and platforms, and therefore make an informed choice on election day;

**WHEREAS**, the COMELEC may hold monthly debates commencing in November or December 2021 until the month of April 2022, where all candidates for president shall be invited to participate in a total of at least five (5) debates;

**WHEREAS**, at the same time, the COMELEC may hold a weekly debate, or a total of at least fifteen (15) debates, where two presidential candidates shall be invited to participate in each debate;

**WHEREAS**, the COMELEC is encouraged to once again work with all forms of media, the academe, and the private sector to organize and conduct the debates;

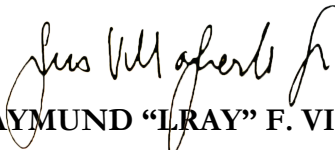
**WHEREAS**, debates will further serve as basis for accountability of elected officials, and allow for a safer way of information dissemination during this pandemic since television, radio broadcasting, as well as the internet, will be maximized to provide as much relevant information to the voters as possible;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED**, by the House of Representatives, to strongly urge the Commission on Elections to start holding debates before the end of 2021 among the presidential, vice presidential, and senatorial aspirants to uphold the people’s right to information and accord candidates equal opportunity to be heard and to reply, for the proper exercise of the right of suffrage.

*Adopted,*

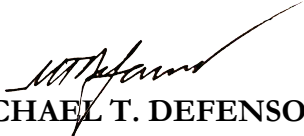
  
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<sup>1</sup> 1987 CONST., Art. IX-C, Sec. 4.