



Election Law and the 2025 (Local) Elections



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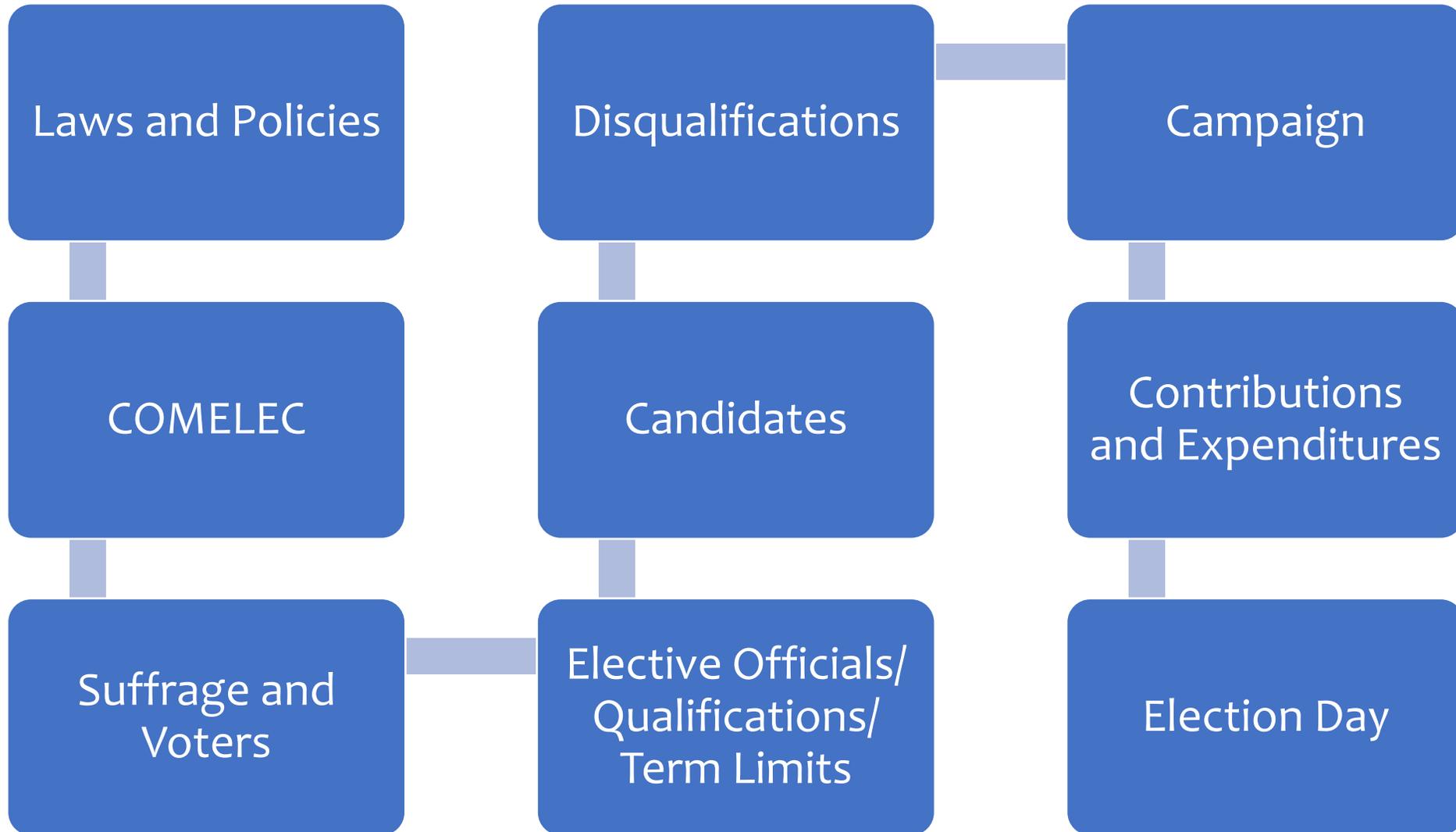
Author, Ballot Unboxed Newsletter

Host, Batas et AL – 2025 Election Series

27 November 2024



Discussion Flow: 9 Topics



Topic/ Subject Matter

We will answer
63 questions
this morning.



Question

Answer



(1) Laws and Policies

1. What is the **purpose/object** of Philippine elections under the 1987 Constitution?
2. What are the **core values** of elections?

CHOPFE

Credible

Honest

Ordery

Peaceful

Free

Elections



(1) Laws and Policies

Can Congress amend the **1991 Local Government Code** and:

1. Require LGU elective officials to be **high school graduates**,
2. Provide for **2 Vice-Mayors** (1 elected and 1 appointed), and
3. Provide for a **Party-List system** in electing members of Local Legislative Councils?

Yes,

1. The 1987 Constitution does not prescribe the structure, qualifications and manner by which LGU officials are selected.
2. Congress has legislative control over the structure and qualifications of LGU officials.



(1) Laws and Policies

1. Can **Congress postpone** the 2025 National, Regional and Local Elections?

2. Can **COMELEC reschedule** the elections in the **whole country**?

1. Yes, provided:
 - Valid reason
 - Not impair suffrage/regularity of elections
2. No, unless:
 - Congress delegates this authority
 - For now, only in a political subdivision



(2) COMELEC

Can COMELEC, through a Resolution, provide for:

1. Mix of automated and manual systems in certain provinces (**Hybrid**)?
2. Registration of **social media** accounts and penalize violators?
3. Continuance in office of **appointive officials** who are party-list nominees?

Principle of Subordinate Legislation

1. No, since Automated Election Law requires automation of elections nationwide.
2. Yes, Fair Election Act covers all other forms of media and violation of FEA IRR is considered an election offense.
3. No, since appointive officials deemed resigned. (SC TRO)



(2) COMELEC

Can COMELEC:

1. Augment items from its **savings?**
 2. Resolve **all Election Protests?**
 3. Choose an Automated System **without ballots?**
 4. Division adjudicate all cases at the **first instance?**
1. Fiscal Autonomy
 2. Jurisdiction depends on elective position (PET, SET, HRET, COMELEC, RTC and MTC)
 3. Automated Election Law empowers COMELEC to choose (Paper-based or Direct Recording – contingent rule)
 4. Depends if Quasi-Judicial (Division) or Administrative (En Banc)



(2) COMELEC

Quasi-Judicial

- Disqualification cases
- Election Protest
- Pre-Proclamation Controversy
- Annulment of Proclamation

Administrative

- Canvassing for Senators and Party-List
- Failure of Elections
- Postponement of Elections
- Filing of Information for an Election Offense
- Annulment of Book of Voters
- Accreditation of Party-List Organizations



(2) COMELEC

1. Can a **decision** of the **COMELEC Division** be elevated to the **Supreme Court** without filing an MR with En banc?
2. Can a **taxpayer question** a **COMELEC Resolution** with the **Supreme Court** without filing an MR with the En banc?

General Rule: Exhaust Administrative Remedies unless (bypass COMELEC En banc):

1. Rule (Quasi-Legislation)
2. Urgency
3. Constitutional Issue
4. Transcendental Concern
5. Pure Question of Law
6. Strong Public Interest



(3) Suffrage and Voters

True or False

1. One must be **qualified** at the time one applies for registration.
 2. A person **born** in X and **studies** in Y, can be registered voter in X or Y.
 3. A voter who failed to vote in **2 previous elections** cannot vote.
1. False, since reckoning point is election day (right to register vs. right to vote)
 2. True, since resident of both places (can only be a voter in one place).
 3. False, since voter can apply for reactivation.



(3) Suffrage and Voters

True or False

4. A voter can question the **qualification of another** voter only up to January 27, 2025.
5. COMELEC can **annul** 10 Book of Voters of a city.
6. A Pollwatcher can **challenge a voter** for selling his/her vote.
4. False, deadline for filing Exclusion Petitions is February 1, 2025.
5. True, for irregularities on preparation of Book of Voters (not on Qs or DQs).
6. True, on ground of Illegal Voter (but Voter can vote if takes an oath)



(4) Elective Officials

1. Do our laws require that all elective officials must be **natural-born citizens**?
 2. Is a Mayor **deemed resigned** if he/she files a CoC for Representative?
 3. Can a Male be a **Party-List Representative** of a Women's Party that obtains 1.7% of 2nd votes?
1. No, only for those holding national positions (not local).
 2. No, Mayor continues in office up to 12:00 n.n., June 30, 2025.
 3. Yes, for as long as he is an advocate of women's rights and a member of that party. Yes, provided not all seats are filled-up.



(4) Term of Local Elective Officials

LEO serves a FULL Term when/ even if ...

1. LEO assumes an **appointive public office**.
2. LEO **resigns** from his/her elective post.
3. LEO **abandons** his/her office.
4. LEO takes a **vacation**.
5. LEO is placed under **preventive suspension**.
6. LEO serves in an **acting capacity** because of a temporary vacancy.
7. LEO who **vacates** an office because of an immediately executory decision of **dismissal by the Ombudsman**.
8. An LGU is **converted to a different level of LGU** (same territory and inhabitants) when the LEO has served 3 consecutive terms for the same office.

LEO does NOT serve a FULL Term when ...

1. LEO assumes an elective post via **succession** due to a permanent vacancy.
2. LEO who **assumes** an elective post because of an immediately executory decision of **dismissal of the Ombudsman**.
3. LEO is **suspended**.
4. LEO assumes office after **winning** in a **recall election**.
5. LEO **loses** in a **recall election** and ousted from office.
6. LEO is ousted from his/her office because of a **quo warranto** case.
7. LEO wins an **Election Protest**.
8. LEO wins a Petition for **correction of manifest errors**.
9. LEO is removed from office after his/her **proclamation is annulled**.



(5) Candidates

Is it correct to say that person is already a **candidate** at the time he/she files his/ her **Certificate of Candidacy (CoC)**?

Can/ must he/she, **prior to the campaign period**:

1. Campaign,
2. Follow specifications for posters and streamers, and
3. Account for contributions and expenditures?

No, since under the Automated Election Law, a candidate:

1. Is one who seeks public elective office,
2. Has filed his/her CoC, *and*
3. Campaign period has started.

Today till the start of the campaign period, CoC filers are Aspirants.

Unlawful acts/ omissions for candidates are reckoned at start of campaign period.



(5) Candidates

Prior to the start of the campaign period (when there are no candidates), what are the possible **liabilities of aspirants?**

- Libel and Cyber-Libel
 - Perjury
 - Unfair Labor Practice
 - Revised Penal Code-Crimes
 - Tax Evasion
 - Fraud
 - Bouncing Checks
 - Littering
- Local Elective Officials:
- Malversation
 - Graft
 - Dishonesty
 - Abandonment
 - Dereliction of Duty
 - Abuse of Authority
 - Oppression



(5) Candidates

1. Who is an **Independent Aspirant/Candidate?**
2. What are the **effects/implications** if one is Independent?

Rules

1. Registered Party
2. Nominated
3. Accepted
4. Subsisting
5. Only 1 Party
6. Authorized Representative

Effects if Independent:

1. Cannot be substituted
2. “IND” across name in ballot
3. Can spend up to P5/voter
4. Can appoint Pollwatchers/lawyers



(5) Candidates

Can an Aspirant/
Candidate be **substituted**
on the grounds of:

1. Withdrawal
2. Death
3. Permanent Incapacity
4. Disqualification
today?

- No, for withdrawal (substitution only allowed during period to file CoCs)
- Yes, for death (up to mid-day of election day; November 15 for name in ballot)
- Yes, for permanent incapacity (case-to-case; up to mid-day of election day; November 15 for name in ballot)
- Yes, for DQ if final judgment (up to mid-day of election day; November 15 for name in ballot) and based on election offense



(6) Disqualifications

What **case** can be filed against an aspirant/ candidate for a local elective position:

1. Not a Filipino when indicated in his/her CoC that he/she is one?
 2. Committed vote-buying?
 3. Is a US permanent resident?
 4. No bona fide intention?
1. Willful Material Misrepresentation (and not qualified)
 2. Disqualification (during campaign period)
 3. Disqualification (unless renounced)
 4. Nuisance Candidate (lack of resources and unpopularity not grounds)

(6) Cases against Local Elective Officials

1. What happens to **pending cases** against Local Elective Officials?
2. Can an LEO be **suspended** during the Election Period?
3. Can an LEO be **recalled** today?



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ELECTION 101
WITH
ATTY. AL AGRA
Election Law Expert

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AGAINST AND CANDIDACIES OF LOCAL ELECTIVE OFFICIALS

1. No investigation during the election period.
2. No suspension during the election period unless with COMELEC approval.
3. No preventive suspension during the election period.
4. No recall on the last year.
5. No condonation because of re-election.



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(7) Campaign

1. Can an LEO give out **sports equipment** with his/her name as part of the LGU's sports program during the campaign period?
2. Can an LEO give **ayuda** to inhabitants after a calamity?

Yes,

1. Campaign designed to promote election or defeat of a candidate (intent).
2. Governance \neq Campaign.
3. If not help, may be held liable for Dereliction of Duty.



(7) Campaign for Local Elective Officials

Matching Type

Choices

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Poster by candidates | A. 1/4 th page in broadsheet |
| 2. Poster by citizens | B. 8.5" W x 14" L |
| 3. Rally streamers by candidates | C. 2' x 3' |
| 4. TV campaign | D. 60 Minutes per station |
| 5. Newspaper ads | E. 3' x 8' |
| 6. Stickers | F. No longer prohibited |
| 7. Social Media by citizens | G. No limit |
| 8. Billboards | |



(8) Contributions and Expenditures

A candidate nominated and supported by a registered political party for a local elective office spent a total of P1.2M. The number of voters for that LGU is 300,000. Is the candidate **liable**?

Rule: P5/voter for independent candidates while P3/voter for affiliated candidates

Maximum: $300,000 \times P3 = P900,000$ (excess of P300,000)

Defenses:

1. Spent prior to campaign period
2. Spent for lawyer, printing of sample ballots and photocopying of list of voters



(8) Contributions and Expenditures

Can a candidate be imprisoned for non-filing of the **Statement of Contributions and Expenditures (SOCE)**?

Deadline: June 11, 2025 (30 days from Election Day)

Effects of Non-Filing:

1. Cannot assume position
2. Not an election offense
3. Not a ground to disqualify



(9) Election Day

1. What time will **polls open** and close on *May 12, 2025*?
 2. Can a voter serve as **pollwatcher** anywhere?
 3. A voter can vote again if **VVPAT** does not reflect votes?
 4. Can *you* get a copy of an **Election Return**?
1. 5 – 7am | 7am – 7pm
 2. No, Pollwatchers must be registered voters where assigned.
 3. No, only objections are allowed.
 4. Yes, if represent a dominant party (2), major political party (10) and local party (2).

Election Law Series

(2) January 17, 2025

1. Election Period Dos and Don'ts
2. Campaign Dos and Don'ts
3. Allowable and Prohibited Contributions and Expenditures
4. Election Offenses

(3) April 11, 2025

1. Postponement and Failure of Elections
2. Casting-Counting-Canvassing-Proclamation
3. Guide to Pollwatchers and Lawyers
4. Pre-Proclamation Controversies
5. Annulment of Proclamation
6. Election Protest

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