

CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES  
SENATE  
RECORDS AND ARCHIVES DIVISION  
(Congress of the Philippines)  
First Regular Session )

SENATE

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COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 6

Jointly submitted by the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People Participation and the Committee on Local Governments

Re: Senate Bill No. 92, entitled: "AN ACT RESETTING THE LOCAL ELECTIONS FROM NOVEMBER 9, 1987 TO JANUARY 18, 1988, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBERED TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY."

Recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsors: Senators Gonzales and Pimentel, Jr.

Dissenting: Senators Maceda and Saguisag

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MR. PRESIDENT:

Following persistent agitations coming from various sources, foremost of which is the Commission on Elections, urging the resetting of the local elections from November 9, 1987, as provided in Executive Order No. 270, to sometime in January or February 1988, joint hearings were conducted by the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People Participation and the Committee on Local Governments in view of its urgency.

In the hearings held on August 4 and 11, 1987, Chairman Ramon Felipe, Commissioners Dario Rama and Andres Flores of the Commission on Elections, Mr. Christian Monsod, Chairman of the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), Provincial Governors Noli Santos of Nueva Ecija and Herminio Teves of Oriental Negros, representing the League of Provincial Governors and City Mayors of the Philippines, former Assemblyman and Deputy Minister Salvador Britanico, and a number of Municipal Mayors

NOT TO BE TAKEN OUT OF THE  
RECORDS AND ARCHIVES DIVISION

representing the Regional Federation of Municipal Mayors Leagues, appeared and gave testimony.

A position paper signed by all the Members of the Commission on Elections requesting the resetting of the local elections to January 18, 1988 was submitted to the Committees. Its concluding paragraph states that:

"A delay of SEVENTY (70) DAYS or two (2) months and ten (10) days from November 9, 1987 to January 18, 1988 is not so long or so unreasonable as to erode the credibility of the Aquino Administration, considering the problems enumerated above, which are beyond the control of the COMELEC. We should not take unnecessary risk with a vital electoral exercise which is the final step towards the normalization of our democracy."

By way of summary, the reasons cited by COMELEC are:

1. In the short space of six months between December, 1986 and May 1987, it undertook three (3) major nation-wide electoral exercises, to wit: (a) the general registration of voters on December 6, 7, 13 and 14, 1986 which eliminated 1.2 million "flying voters" from the voters' lists of the February 1986 "snap" presidential election; (b) the plebiscite on the 1987 Constitution on February 2, 1987; and (c) the national elections for 24 Senators and 200 Representatives on May 11, 1987 under a novel multi-party system, in which 26 million registered voters were involved. In contrast, before the imposition of martial law in 1972, elections were held once every two (2) years only. COMELEC had then at least one (1) full year to prepare for an election.

2. Executive Order No. 270 setting the local elections on November 9, 1987, was signed by the President last July 25, 1987, was signed by the President last July 25, 1987 giving COMELEC only 104 days from July 27, 1987, when it received a copy of the same, to prepare for the elections and exactly 60 days to prepare for the special registration of voters on September 26th.

3. The amount of P20 million, part of the P200 million

appropriated for the local elections, was received by the COMELEC only on August 10, 1987, 45 days before the special registration on September 26th, for which 1.5 million voters' affidavits in quadruplicate or a total of 6 million sheets plus 380,000 copies of "long" voters' lists and 630,000 copies of "short" voters lists and 380,000 copies of general instructions for registration day have to be printed. In addition, 318,000 printakers, 424,000 ballpens plus other supplies and materials have to be purchased immediately. Printers and suppliers require at least 30 days to print/deliver, and another 30 days are needed for verifying deliveries, packing and shipping them to 101,551 precincts from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi.

4. Although COMELEC invited bids for various supplies, materials and printed forms needed as early as July 13, 1987, no contracts could be entered immediately thereafter because partial release of funds were received on August 10, 1987 only. Any contract without an accompanying "CERTIFICATE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS" is illegal and void.

5. After September 26th, there will be only 43 days left before election day, if held on November 9, 1987. Within that short period of time, exclusion and inclusion petitions may be filed with the Metro and Municipal Trial Courts, which may be appealed to the Regional Trial Courts. Disqualification proceedings will have to be resolved. Election returns and other accountable forms will have to be shipped out within 30 days and voting booths set up in every precinct.

6. There will be 16,474 local positions to be voted upon and more than 100,000 candidates are expected to file certificates of candidacy, who will be competing with COMELEC for the printing of their sample ballots, handbills, pamphlets, etc.

7. Until the last day for filing of certificates of candidacy, there is no way of knowing how many candidates there will

actually be. Hence, the size of the election returns, certificate of canvass, statement of votes and certificates of votes received cannot be determined and printed early enough and distributed to the 101,551 precincts throughout the country.

8. If protests are filed before the Senate and House Electoral Tribunals the ballot boxes involved therein cannot be used in the local elections. New ballot boxes, including those needed for additional precincts, will have to be ordered. At P400 per ballot box, the amount needed will run into several millions, and will take more than two (2) months to manufacture.

9. Executive Order No. 270 prohibits posters and mandates the setting up of common poster areas by COMELEC. This is an innovation which is not included in the P200 million appropriated therein. Billboards for the common poster areas will have to be procured, their locations determined, and contracts bidded out. All these will also take time.

10. If electoral reforms are enacted by Congress, there may be no time to implement them.

11. There are still peace and order problems in many parts of the country. Insurgency and bitter political rivalry arising out of the recent national elections and the keen struggle for local political leadership may again result in the failure of elections in certain areas.

12. In the meanwhile, COMELEC is still occupied in a number of pre-proclamation controversies.

Additionally, it may also be pointed out that while Executive Order No. 270 mandates the election of the municipal boards and councils in the Metro Manila area, there is as yet no determination of their composition, especially in Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan City, and Pasay City.

In fine, what COMELEC is saying is that if the local elections are held on November 9, 1987, it has no recourse but to do

their best but in view of time constraints, it cannot guarantee that all the structures essential to a clean, honest, orderly, and credible election will be in place.

On its part, speaking through its Chairman Christian Monsod, NAMFREL joins the COMELEC in seeking a resetting of the local elections but not to January 18, 1988, but to sometime during the latter part of February or even March 1988 for substantially most of the reasons earlier enumerated.

The position of the provincial governors and municipal mayors is this: they are all ready for the November 9th local elections; however, since COMELEC admits that it needs more time to put into place all the structures necessary for a clean, honest, and orderly elections, then they have to accept that reality. For his part, Provincial Governor Herminio Teves opposes any postponement of the local polls because their present status as officers-in-charge makes them low in the estimate of their constituents thereby preventing them from fully implementing economic development projects in their respective localities.

Former Assemblyman Salvador Britanico cited constitutional and political grounds in registering his opposition. He claimed that Congress has no power to amend Executive Order No. 270 because the second paragraph of Section 1 of Article XVIII (Transitory Provisions) expressly vests the power to determine the date of the local elections to the President. Politically, he believes that postponement of the local polls is inimical to the national interests because the people generally want to elect their local leaders as soon as possible and that prolonging the tenure of local O-I-C's will impair their effectiveness in carrying out their developmental efforts.

At the outset, it must be stressed that most, if not all, of the members of both Committees, especially those who were former Members of the Cabinet, want local elections as soon as



possible, it being recognized as the last step in the political normalization of the country. When the local elections was being considered in the Cabinet during the early part of this year, there was a general consensus that the same should be held in June or July 1987. Former Minister Ramon Mitra, Minister of Agriculture and Food, and now Speaker of the House of Representatives, even wanted it held simultaneously with the national elections last May 11, 1987.

However, upon the recommendations of Chairman Ramon Felipe, the date of the local elections was announced for August 24, 1987. Unfortunately, it was only sometime last April when the President promulgated Proclamation No. 94 setting the local elections on August 24, 1987. Moreover, it did not appropriate any funds for it.

With its attention fully focused on the national elections held on May 11, 1987, and the number of post-election problems faced by it, the local elections could not just be held on August 24th. In fairness to facts, it was also Chairman Felipe who recommended that it be held sometime in November 1987. But also in fairness to him, it is also true that Executive Order No. 270 was signed by the President only on July 25, 1987, and that the first release of P20 million for the expenses of the local elections was received by COMELEC only on August 10, 1987. Hence, its request for a resetting of the local elections to January 18, 1988.

We can debate endlessly and arguably with merit, on this proposal. Charges of incompetence or neglect may be against COMELEC as some quarters had already done.

But we cannot detract from the fact that the very constitutional body exclusively charged with the enforcement and administration of all laws and regulations relative to the conduct of elections (Sec. 2 (1), C, Art. IX, 1987 Constitution) had

formally admitted that for reasons heretofore cited, it may not be able to put in place all the means and structures essential to holding a clean, honest, and orderly local elections if held on November 9, 1987. January 18, 1988, according to its Chairman, affords the minimum period for the said purpose.

It does not mean that the Senate is necessarily bound by its recommendations. However, prescinding any counterveiling reasons, these Committees find COMELEC's position not capricious or arbitrary.

Local elections are generally heated and bitter. They affect the local communities directly. Every effort should therefore be made to insure that above the rise and fall of political fortunes, said elections must not only be clean, honest and orderly but also credible.

Both Committees hasten to disabuse the minds of some quarters that the proposal to reset the local polls is a political judgment. The political advantages of holding the local elections on November 9, 1987 far outweigh whatever benefit that may be derived if reset to January 7, 1988. For one, an early election and shorter periods of campaign are advantageous to an incumbent; for another, coming close on the heels of the May 11, 1987 national elections, where most of the incumbents actively campaigned, local polls on November 9th will still carry the momentum of their efforts which will provide them initial advantage. But foremost is that public perception that being incumbents, they are administration candidates, and they can ride on the popularity of the President which may dip considerably if elections are held two (2) months later. Finally, there is really no significant advantage that can be derived in extending the elections by seventy (70) days. If they are not popular and therefore winnable on November 9th, they could hardly be that popular on January 18, 1988.

We now come to grip with the constitutional power of Congress to enact a law amending the second paragraph of Section 1 of Article XVIII (Transitory Provisions) which provides:

"The first local elections shall be held on a date to be determined by the President, which may be simultaneous with the election of the Members of Congress. It shall include the election of all Members of the city or municipal councils in the Metropolitan Manila area."

It is now argued that only the President can determine or fix the date of the first local elections. The power to call an election is a legislative power. Being contained in the transitory provisions, it is intended to be exercised by the President from the date of the ratification of the Constitution on February 2, 1987 to the convening of the First Congress on July 27, 1987 consistent with the grant of legislative power to the President under Section 6 of Article XVIII which provides that:

"The incumbent President shall continue to exercise legislative powers until the first Congress is convened."

This intention is very clear from the clause "which may simultaneous with the election of the Members of Congress" fixed by the Constitution itself "on the second Monday of May 1987" (Sec. 1, Art. XVIII).

The President exercised this power not once but twice. First, under Proclamation No. 94 issued in April 1987 which set the date of the local elections on August 24, 1987; and, second, Executive Order No. 270 resetting it to November 9, 1987. She can continue to exercise this power until July 27, 1987 because of the express grant of legislative power under Section 6



of Article XVIII. Thereafter, the power exhausted itself.

If we concede that only the President can determine the date of the first local elections and under the afore-quoted provision she can no longer exercise legislative power after July 27, 1987, then Executive Order No. 270 will be in the nature of an irrevocable law which violates the constitutional principle of republicanism that "no irrevocable law shall be passed".

Moreover, Executive Order No. 270 is but a law; therefore, it is subject to the plenary grant of legislative power to Congress under Section 1 of Article VI: "The legislative power shall be vested in the Congress of the Philippines x x x ."

Finally, if a bill resetting the date of the local elections is passed by Congress and approved into law by the President, that is substantially a determination by the President on the assumption that she and she alone can exercise that power.

It is for these reasons that the Committees on Electoral Reforms and People Participation and Local Governments had prepared and filed Senate Bill No. 66. Its principal features are:

1. Section 1 amends Section 1 of Executive Order No. 270 by resetting the date of the local elections to January 18, 1988. Deadline for the filing of the certificates of candidacy is forty-five (45) days (instead of thirty (30) days) prior to the said election. The purpose is to give the COMELEC sufficient time to prepare, print, and distribute all accountable forms, including the election returns, tally boards, tally sheets, etc. The original thirty (30) days period is too short and too tight for this purpose.

It also provides for the re-assumption of the positions of those who will be designated as acting officers-in-charge upon the election and assumption of office of the elective local officials. The Secretary of Local Governments is also empowered

to designate acting members of the various Sanggunians if their membership is unduly depleted due to the candidacies of their members.

2. Section 2 provides for the members of the City and municipal boards or councils in the Metropolitan Manila area for purposes of the local elections on January 18, 1988, to wit: five (5) councilors each for each representative district to be elected by the qualified voters therein for the City of Manila, Quezon City, and City of Caloocan; ten (10) councilors for Pasay City, Makati, Parañaque, Pasig, Marikina, and Valenzuela; each of which comprises a legislative district, to be elected at large by all the qualified voters therein; and, eight (8) councilors for each of the other municipalities in the Metropolitan Manila area to be elected at large by the qualified voters therein.

3. Section 3 provides that the City of Cebu, City of Davao, and any other city with more than one representative district shall have five (5) councilors for each district to be elected by the qualified voters therein.

4. Section 4 provides that local officials duly elected shall assume office on the second day of February 1988.

5. Section 5 for an election period from November 19, 1987 to February 17, 1988, and a campaign period of forty-five (45) days for provincial and city elective officers, including the city and municipal officers in the Metropolitan Manila area, and thirty (30) days for all municipal elective officers in the rest of the country.

6. Section 6 provides for a special registration of voters on Saturday, November 28, 1987.

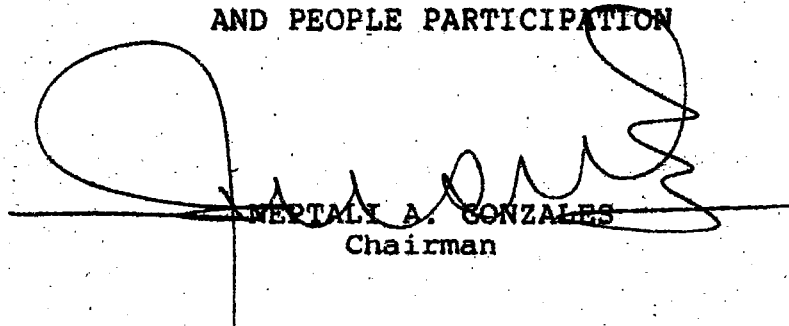
7. Section 7 increases the appropriations for the holding of the local elections from P200 million to P220 million to

cover the expected increase in prices due to the recent increase in the prices of gasoline and other petroleum products.

Early approval of this bill without amendments is strongly urged.

COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS  
AND PEOPLE PARTICIPATION

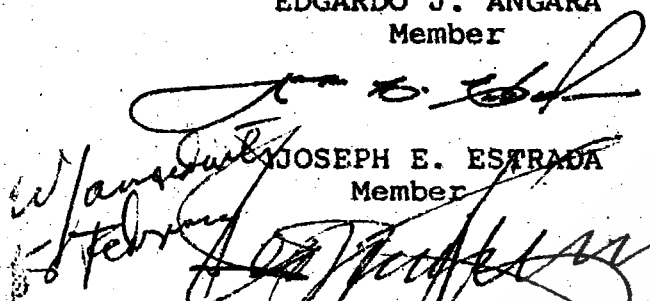
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

  
NEPTALI A. GONZALES  
Chairman

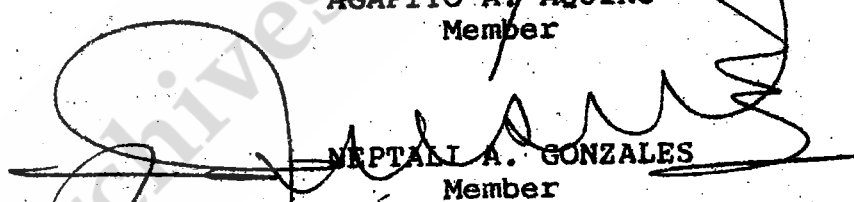
  
AQUILINO PIMENTEL, JR.  
Chairman

EDGARDO J. ANGARA  
Member

AGAPITO A. AQUINO  
Member

*will submit report by February*  


JOSEPH E. ESTRADA  
Member



NEPTALI A. GONZALES  
Member

TEOFISTO T. GUINGONA, JR.  
Member

ERNESTO F. HERRERA  
Member

*Assessing will submit report by February*  


ERNESTO M. MACEDA  
Member

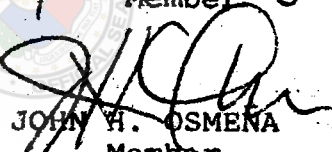


SOTERO H. LAUREL  
Member

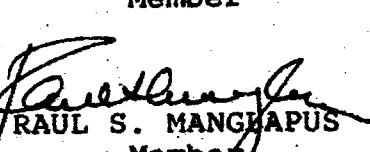
*Assessing will submit report by February*  


RAUL S. MANG LAPUS  
Member

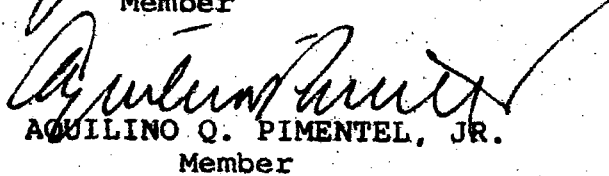
ERNESTO M. MACEDA  
Member



JOHN H. OSMENA  
Member



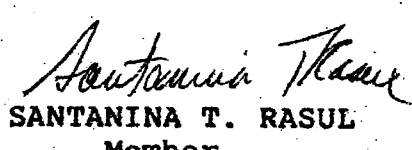
RAUL S. MANG LAPUS  
Member



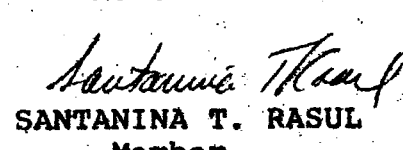
AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR.  
Member



JOHN H. OSMENA  
Member



SANTANINA T. RASUL  
Member



SANTANINA T. RASUL  
Member

COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS  
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COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

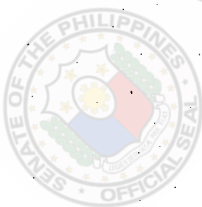
*Alberto E. Tanada*  
ALBERTO E. TANADA  
Member

*Victor S. Ziga*  
VICTOR S. ZIGA  
Member

*In favor of 1987 date for local  
election*  
*Alberto G. Romulo*  
ALBERTO G. ROMULO  
Member

*OPEN ON DATE*  
RENE A.V. SAGUISAG  
Member

*Alberto E. Tanada*  
ALBERTO A. TANADA  
Member



Senate Archives

S E N A T E

S. NO. 92

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Introduced by the Committee on Electoral Reforms  
and People's Participation and the Committee  
on Local Governments, per Committee Report  
No. 6  
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AN ACT  
RESETTING THE LOCAL ELECTIONS FROM NOVEMBER 9, 1987 TO  
JANUARY 18, 1988, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE EXECUTIVE  
ORDER NUMBERED TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of  
Representatives of the Philippines in Congress  
assembled:

1 SECTION 1. Section 1 of Executive Order No. 270  
2 is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 "SECTION 1. Election of local officials. -  
4 There shall be elections for provincial  
5 governors, provincial vice-governors, city and  
6 municipal mayors, city and municipal vice-mayors,  
7 and members of each Sangguniang Panlalawigan,  
8 Sangguniang Panglungsod, and Sangguniang  
9 Pambayan, including all members of the city or  
10 municipal BOARDS OR councils in the Metropolitan  
11 Manila area to be held on Monday, JANUARY 18,  
12 1988 [November 9, 1987]; Provided, That all local  
13 officials, whether elected, acting or  
14 officer-in-charge, shall be deemed automatically  
15 resigned from their positions effective upon the  
16 filing of their certificates of candidacy for any  
17 local position which shall not be later than  
18 FORTY FIVE [thirty] (45) [30] days prior to the



1 said elections. If the governor or the city or  
2 municipal mayor is a candidate but the  
3 vice-governor or the city or municipal vice-mayor  
4 is not a candidate in said elections, then the  
5 latter shall become the acting governor or mayor,  
6 as the case may be, until the election and  
7 assumption to office of the duly elected governor  
8 or mayor. If both the governor and the  
9 vice-governor or both the mayor and vice-mayor  
10 are candidates, an acting officer-in-charge to  
11 the position vacated shall be designated by the  
12 SECRETARY [Department] of Local Government from  
13 the following local officials:

- 14 a) Provincial/City/Municipal Administrator
- 15 b) Provincial /City/Municipal Planning and  
16 Development Coordinator
- 17 c) Provincial/City/Municipal Secretary in  
18 the absence of the Administrator and  
19 Coordinator.

20 UPON THE ELECTION AND ASSUMPTION TO OFFICE OF THE  
21 GOVERNOR AND VICE-GOVERNOR OR MAYOR AND  
22 VICE-MAYOR, AS THE CASE MAY BE, THEY SHALL  
23 REASSUME THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS UNTIL THEY  
24 ARE REPLACED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW.

25 "IN CASE OF VACANCIES IN THE SANGGUNIANG  
26 PANLALAWIGAN, SANGGUNIANG PANGLUNSOD, OR  
27 SANGGUNIANG PAMBAYAN ON ACCOUNT OF THE  
28 CANDIDACIES OF THEIR MEMBERS, THE SECRETARY OF  
29 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHALL DESIGNATE ACTING MEMBERS  
30 FROM QUALIFIED VOTERS IN THE PROVINCE OR  
31 MUNICIPALITY SO THAT A QUORUM COULD BE HAD IN THE  
32 LOCAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES CONCERNED.

1                    "[Local officials duly elected shall assume  
2                    office on the first day of December 1987.]"

3                    SEC. 2. Metro Manila Area. - For purposes of  
4                    the Local Election on January 18, 1988, the following  
5                    Cities in the Metropolitan Manila Area shall have  
6                    five (5) councilors for each of their representative  
7                    districts to be elected by the qualified voters  
8                    therein: City of Manila, Quezon City, and City of  
9                    Caloocan, Provided, however, That the City of Pasay  
10                   and the Municipalities of MAKATI, Parañaque, Pasig,  
11                   Marikina, and Valenzuela, each of which comprises a  
12                   representative district, shall have ten (10)  
13                   councilors each to be elected at large by all the  
14                   qualified voters of the said city or municipality.  
15                   All the other municipalities within the Metropolitan  
16                   Manila area shall have eight (8) councilors each to be  
17                   elected at large by their respective qualified  
18                   voters.

19                   SEC. 3. The provision of any law to the  
20                   contrary notwithstanding, the City of Cebu, City of  
21                   Davao, and any other city with more than one  
22                   representative and district shall have five (5)  
23                   councilors for each district to be elected by the  
24                   qualified voters therein.

25                   SEC. 4. Local officials duly elected shall  
26                   assume office on the second day of February 1988.

27                   SEC. 5. Section 2 of Executive Order No. 270 is  
28                   hereby amended to read as follows:

29                   "SEC. 2. Election and Campaign Periods. -  
30                   [As recommended and designated by the Commission  
31                   on Elections] The election period shall be from  
32                   NOVEMBER 19, 1987 [September 10, 1987] to

1 FEBRUARY 17, 1988 [December 9, 1987]; and the  
2 campaign period shall be FORTY-FIVE (45) [thirty  
3 (30) ] days commencing on DECEMBER 3 [October  
4 10, 1987] and ending on JANUARY 17, 1988  
5 [November 8, 1987] FOR PROVINCIAL AND CITY  
6 ELECTIVE OFFICERS, INCLUDING THE CITY AND  
7 MUNICIPAL OFFICERS IN THE METROPOLITAN MANILA  
8 AREA, AND FROM DECEMBER 19, 1987 TO JANUARY 17,  
9 1988 FOR ALL MUNICIPAL ELECTIVE OFFICERS IN THE  
10 REST OF THE COUNTRY."

11 SEC. 6. Section 4 of Executive Order No. 270 is  
12 hereby amended to read as follows:

13 "SEC. 4. Special Registration of Voters.

14 - There shall be special registration on  
15 Saturday, NOVEMBER 28 [September 26], 1987 for  
16 voters who will reach the age of eighteen (18)  
17 on JANUARY 18, 1988 [November 9, 1987], or those  
18 who failed to register in the general  
19 registration of voters last December 1986 or in  
20 the special registration before the elections  
21 for Members of Congress on May 11, 1987,  
22 Provided, That the Commission may order a  
23 general re-registration of all voters on such  
24 dates it may set in certain provinces, cities or  
25 municipalities, where it deems necessary to  
26 eliminate rampant illegal registration of voters  
27 and thereby ensure the holding of free, orderly,  
28 honest, peaceful and credible elections."

29 SEC. 7. Section 6 of Executive Order No. 270 is  
30 hereby amended to read as follows:

31 "SEC. 6. Appropriations. - The amount of  
32 TWO HUNDRED TWENTY MILLION (P220,000,000.00)]  
33 [TWO HUNDRED MILLION (P200,000,000.00)] PESOS,

1 or so much thereof as may be necessary for the  
2 holding of the local elections, is hereby set  
3 aside out of the annual budget and savings of  
4 the Commission on Elections, which shall be  
5 released automatically by the Department of  
6 Budget and Management upon request of the  
7 Chairman of the Commission Elections, based on  
8 the approved special budget. In case of  
9 deficiencies, the funds herein provided shall  
10 be augmented from the contingent fund or any  
11 other applicable appropriations authorized in  
12 the Current General Appropriations Act, which  
13 shall likewise be released automatically upon  
14 similar request of the Chairman of the  
15 Commission on Elections."

16 SEC. 8. This Act shall take effect upon its  
17 approval.

Approved,

(Sgd.) NEPTALI A. GONZALES  
Chairman  
THE COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORMS  
AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

(Sgd.) AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR.  
Chairman  
THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



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JOINT REPORT  
COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM & PEOPLE PARTICIPATION  
& COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
Senate, Manila

Re: Postponement of Local Elections  
Set on November 9, 1987 by  
Executive Order No. 270

DISSENTING OPINION

Messrs. Chairmen and  
Distinguished Members of the Committees:

Allow me to express my strong dissent against any further postponement of the local elections set on November 9. As I said in my privilege speech on August 6, this matter of local elections has a long background. It was first conceived to be held in June 1986 to coincide with the expiration of the terms of local officials. Then it was tentatively proposed for January in the belief that the Concom will finish its job in 90 days and the plebiscite will be held in November or December, 1986. After the ratification of the Constitution on February 2, there was a strong move to hold the local elections on May 11 or a week after the election of the members of the Congress. The Comelec did not agree to this later date and proposed instead August 24 or August 31. For one reason or another, it was moved again to November 9, to which the Comelec gave its full accord.

On the other hand, you would probably recall, Messrs. Chairmen, that those of us who worked in the Executive Department after the February revolution and were with the President during the campaign for a "yes" vote for the passage of the Constitution, had convinced the President to issue a public statement of assurance that local elections will immediately follow after February 2. The President conceded and promised to the people that she will announce the date of the local elections immediately after the plebiscite. Subsequently, the President grudgingly acquiesced to a Comelec proposal for August

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24 or 31. Thereafter she was prevailed upon to postpone it to November 9 as set in Executive Order No. 270. The credibility of the President of the Philippines and all of us who made representations that local elections will be held soon after the February 2 plebiscite is at stake if we are to reset the local elections again to January 18, 1988. This is why I said in my privilege speech that there are many repercussions and reverberations if we are to postpone the local elections.

I strongly believe that the Comelec's proposition incorporated in its position paper submitted to these Honorable Committees to reset the local elections from November 9 to January 18, 1988 is devoid of merit. The excuse of Comelec that if compelled to conduct the elections on November 9, it cannot assure honest, orderly and free elections is not believable. On the August 4 joint meeting of our Committees which is about 95 days between then and November 9, Comelec Chairman Ramon Felipe, Jr. claimed that the Comelec did not have enough time to prepare. This is ridiculous. With the experience of the May 11 elections under its belt and with the Comelec duly organized, compared to its situation between February 2 and May 11, 1987 (total of 90 days) the Comelec cannot say that 95 days starting on August 4 will not be enough. As a matter of fact, Comelec was supposed to be ready for August 24, which was the earlier date chosen by the President.

Everything has been set for the local elections contrary to the representation of the Comelec. As of the first week of August, Comelec has already bidden the supplies, the ballot boxes, the voting booths and previously they have bidden already the materials and papers required to print the ballots. Above all, according to the Budget Commission the money needed by the Comelec for the coming elections are ready for Comelec's withdrawal. In fact, according to Secretary Guillermo Carague if

there is any delay in the release of the funds needed for the elections, it was due to the negligence of Chairman Ramon Felipe, Jr. in not submitting the necessary supporting papers. Are they intentionally "freezing the ball?" It appears so.

In the September 1 issue of the Manila Bulletin, p. 8, Chairman Ramon Felipe, Jr. has finally conceded that Comelec is ready even for Nov. 9. (See clipping attached.)

I submit that there is an urgent need to proceed with the local elections on November 9 if we want to see our development programs to succeed immediately. Why do I say this? It is because now many of our OIC Mayors and governors do not yet still have the effective moral leadership and the acceptance of the community to get the public cooperation necessary to implement programs effectively. It is my sincere belief that until we get the local officials elected as soon as possible and accepted by the communities as the duly elected leaders of the town or of the province who should lead them in the development programs, our development programs will not succeed. We cannot impose leadership from the national level when it comes to development programs that will be implemented on municipal or barangay levels.

Furthermore, Messrs. Chairmen, I also believe that if we hold the local elections after Christmas on January 18 as proposed, it would impose a campaign period during Christmas season where during the campaign, it can be expected that political protagonists will continue their heated debates, mudslinging, and even fighting and killing. This has not happened before in our history. This is certainly unchristian.

I further submit that with the recent oil price increases and other issues such as employees' demand for wage increases and the many unresolved labor disputes to mention only a few, it would be good that the forthcoming elections be held before Christmas so that our people will have more money to spend during

the season and have a more comfortable Christmas.

The latest rebellion of August 28 very emphatically requires that democracy must be fully re-established to remove any further cause for disaffection among our people. It is more urgent now to listen to the voice of the greater majority who want to exercise their right to choose their local officials.

Messrs. Chairmen, we have promised an early local elections to the people and they are eagerly awaiting this. This is a matter that will be the final step in the normalization process and the full restoration of the rights of our people. Let us not delay it. Believe me, the reaction to a postponement will be adverse, to say the least. The administration refused to listen to their voices of protest before oil prices were increased. Let's listen to them now.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, I hereby reiterate my dissent to any move to postpone the local elections from November 9, 1987 to a much later date.

  
ERNESTO M. MACEDA  
Member

