

PRESS RELEASE

**DepEd jumpstarts preparations for barangay and SK elections**

The Department of Education (DepEd) has started preparations for the October 25 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections by coordinating with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for the smooth conduct of the coming polls.

“We met with the COMELEC En Banc last week and we are crafting a memorandum of agreement that will outline the roles and responsibilities of DepEd and COMELEC,” said DepEd Undersecretary for Legal and Legislative Affairs and Official Spokesperson Atty. Alberto Muyot.

To be included in the agreement are provisions for the capacity building of teachers who will man the polls and possible allocation for insurance and other benefits. “We will also ask COMELEC to release the honorarium of teachers on poll duty in full and not on a by-day basis or in parts.”

Muyot added that DepEd will come up with a separate memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Philippine National Police to help ensure the protection of teachers. The PNP reported that compared to the recent national elections, the coming election will entail more risks to teachers who will form part of the board of election tellers (BET). “Working at the local level, they are prone to harassment and possible acts of violence from political rivals or losing candidates,” Muyot said.

DepEd will disseminate to teachers a COMELEC resolution that provides the guidelines for the teachers on the performance of their duties as BETs.

According to COMELEC, some 450,000 teachers will be needed for the election duty because votes will be manually counted. Muyot added that DepEd will also work out a separate MOA with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) for legal assistance for teachers. “Because ballots will be counted manually, we cannot avoid instances when names will be inadvertently misread or for a count to be missed,” Muyot explained.

To support its teachers, DepEd will organize an election task force at the central office which will be replicated at the regional and division levels. They will monitor the elections and will work hand in hand with COMELEC and the PNP to provide teachers with immediate assistance in case an untoward situation arises.

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