

PRESS RELEASE

**DepED appeals to COMELEC to allow disenfranchised teachers to vote**

A few days before the country's first automated elections, the Department of Education is making a last minute appeal to the COMELEC to allow disenfranchised teachers to vote in order to arrest the rising demoralization among their ranks as a result of a COMELEC ruling.

In yesterday's election briefing conducted by the Department of Education, members of the BEI (Board of Election Inspectors) complained to DepEd officials on COMELEC's refusal to act on their request for reactivation.

"Our teachers have been religiously performing their election duties as part of public service since the country's first elections. For them to be deactivated as a consequence of their service is grossly unfair. We urge COMELEC to listen to the plight of the teachers," said Undersecretary Franklin Sunga.

Sunga, who also heads the DepEd election task force, explained that, per COMELEC guidelines, any person who has not voted in the precinct where he is a registered voter for the past two (2) elections are automatically removed from the voters list. Since members of the BEI voted in the precincts where they were serving and not in their original precincts, the COMELEC deactivated their original voter registration – hence, the disenfranchisement.

Assistant Secretary Jonathan Malaya, DepEd Spokesperson, echoed the same concern emphasizing that, "we are the frontliners, the workforce of COMELEC during elections and yet COMELEC refuses to grant even these simplest of request for reasons that are frankly beyond their control. Why should the poor teacher be penalized?"

Malaya said that many teachers serving as BEIs, especially those in the National Capital Region and in other urban areas are demoralized and are clearly disappointed with being deprived their basic constitutional right. "We have been asking COMELEC for the longest time to resolve this issue," he said.

DepEd officials declared that, "in behalf of our teacher-BEIs, we urge COMELEC to immediately reactivate in the lists of registered voters those public school teachers who have been deactivated. It's ironic that the very same people manning the polls cannot themselves exercise the right to suffrage."

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