



NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)

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PRESS RELEASE

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An extension of terms without an election

NAMFREL today emphasized the importance of elected officials submitting themselves to regular elections to receive a fresh mandate from their constituents. This is in reaction to the proposed postponement of the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections (BSKE) to December 2022, which has just been signed into law by President Duterte.

"The reason propounded for moving the election date was to give village and youth council officials more time to implement their projects. While the reason has some validity, incumbent elected officials have to submit themselves to the people's mandate through periodic elections," NAMFREL Secretary General Eric Jude Alvia said in a statement. "If constituents are satisfied with their performance, they need not worry about their terms being cut and they can continue on implementing their respective programs or projects with a fresh and stronger mandate," Mr. Alvia continued.

NAMFREL had earlier opposed any postponement to the BSKE, saying that doing so will contravene the principle of regularity in the conduct of an election, extend the terms of elected officials without being elected anew, and will deprive the electorate of seeking accountability from elected officials through the ballot. NAMFREL also stressed that election dates set by law can be justified only by the presence of certain conditions enumerated in the Philippine Omnibus Election Code, such as violence, terrorism, loss or destruction of election paraphernalia or records, and force majeure, and that it is the task of the Comelec to make such determination through public hearings. According to NAMFREL, none of these conditions exist, and no such consultations with the voting public ever took place.

The newly signed law lifts the uncertainty to the conduct of the elections on May 2020, as originally scheduled, and alleviates the Commission on Elections (Comelec) and related stakeholders from expending unnecessary resources in their preparation. However, the postponement consequently extends the terms of village and youth officials by another two and a half years, well past the presidential / national elections on May 2022. NAMFREL warns that this could lead to the politicization of the barangays and SK, and that they could be utilized for the campaigns. ###