



## **NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)**

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### **Press Statement**

**May 31, 2019, 17:00H**

### **NAMFREL TO COMELEC: Heed the President's advice to junk Smartmatic**

The National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) calls on the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to heed President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's advise to "dispose" of Smartmatic.

NAMFREL has taken note that the conduct of the automated elections since 2010 is not without the participation of Smartmatic, a foreign company. The conduct of Philippine elections, automated or not, should be left at the hands of Filipinos.

The President's pronouncement opens up the opportunity to look for other election technologies. It should be noted, however, that Republic Act No. 9369 (RA9369) or the Automated Election Law prescribes that the automated election system "x x x must have demonstrated capability and been successfully used in a prior electoral exercise here or abroad." This provision effectively prevents local systems developers from participating in the development and supply of an automated election system. RA9369 needs to be revisited and amended to open up opportunities for local technology providers to supply locally developed election solutions that protects the secrecy of the ballot and ensures transparency of the vote count.

NAMFREL has proposed going back to manual voting and counting. NAMFREL clarifies that it does not mean going back to the old manual vote counting process. The proposed process involves the following:

- 1) Manual voting using ballots with blank spaces per contest where the voter writes the names of this choices and the ballot to be dropped in a ballot box,
- 2) Computer assisted vote counting using laptops and LCD projectors to publicly display the progress of the vote tally, thereby doing away with the tally boards pasted on all four walls of school classrooms that served as voting precincts.
- 3) Electronic generation of the election return based on the computer assisted vote count followed by printing of the election returns. The contents of the printed copy of the election returns may be compared with its electronic counterpart displayed via LCD projector,
- 4) Electronic transmission of election returns to the corresponding city/municipal canvassing server, and

- 5) Automated canvassing and consolidation of election results through the ladderized canvassing hierarchy.

It is high time that the Philippines' IT talents are harnessed for our elections. While our IT community works on the appropriate responsive technology, interested stakeholders should push for the law to be amended.

NAMFREL calls on election lawyers, IT experts, election reform organizations, and other interested groups to come together and work with the COMELEC to look for the appropriate responsive, election technology solution.

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