



Republic of the Philippines  
**COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS**  
Intramuros, Manila

**EN BANC**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF MASS MEDIA AND OBSERVERS SPECIFIC FOR THE OCTOBER 30, 2023 BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN (SK) ELECTIONS**

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Promulgated: July 26, 2023

**RESOLUTION NO. 10942**

**WHEREAS**, on June 7, 2023, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) promulgated Resolution No. 10924 entitled "General Guidelines and Other Related Laws for the October 30, 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) and All Succeeding BSKEs Thereafter";

**WHEREAS**, Article IX of the said General Guidelines prescribed the procedures for the accreditation of mass media and observers;

**WHEREAS**, Article IX of the said General Guidelines is of general application hence, the need for the Commission to prescribe guidelines specific to the conduct of the October 30, 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, and fix dates such as the filing applications for accreditation and reports on actions taken thereon, amongst others;

**WHEREAS**, prior experiences and procedures adopted in recent elections, given likewise the current health situation of the country, there is a necessity to provide a hybrid mechanism to further streamline and make more efficient the filing of applications for accreditation;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, and other election laws, the COMELEC has **RESOLVED**, as it hereby **RESOLVES**, to promulgate the following specific guidelines for the accreditation of media and observers applicable to the October 30, 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections:

**SECTION 1. Dates for filing application for accreditation.** - For purposes of the October 30, 2023 BSKE, the filing of applications shall be from **August 1 to September 29, 2023.**

**SECTION 2. Submission of applications for accreditation.** - The applications for accreditation shall be filed at the following offices:

- a) Applications for accreditation of 1) *national media, foreign media and other media*, both domestic and foreign, such as novelists, screenwriters, playwrights, and those involved in the production of feature films and documentaries; and 2) *foreign observers and domestic observers with official addresses in the National Capital Region* shall be filed at the **Education and Information Department (EID)** either personally or by an authorized representative or via online.

Applicants who prefer to file their applications online shall submit their applications by accomplishing an online registration form and submitting the requirements via this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/k26Xz8gzWh> or QR code:



- b) Applications for accreditation of *local media* shall be filed at the **Office of the Provincial Election Supervisor (OPES) concerned** personally or through an authorized representative; and
- c) Applications for accreditation of *domestic observers* residing within the provinces in the region shall be filed at the **Offices of the Regional Election Directors (OREDs) concerned** personally or through an authorized representative.

The prescribed application forms are downloadable at the COMELEC website, [www.comelec.gov.ph](http://www.comelec.gov.ph).

**SECTION 3. Documentary requirements for accreditation.** - Applicants for accreditation shall submit the following requirements:

- a) **For media (national, local and foreign):**

- A fully accomplished COMELEC Media Accreditation Form;
- Two (2) recent 1.5" x 1.5" colored photographs;

- Endorsement from the publisher, editor-in-chief, assignment editor, station manager, or similar officer of the newspaper, television station, radio station, or online publication employing the applicant;
- An endorsement from the appropriate officer of the broadcast entity or film distributor which has committed to air/distribute the work; and
- In the case of freelancers, a valid assignment letter from the *bona fide* media organization for which the freelancer is on assignment.

**b) For observers (foreign and local):**

- Duly accomplished COMELEC Observer Accreditation Form;
- Two (2) recent 1.5”x 1.5” colored photographs of the applicant;
- If foreigner or foreign group, organization, committee or association organization, endorsement issued by the ambassador or consul of the applicant’s home country;
- For foreign nationals who are members of their countries’ election management bodies or election administration authorities, an endorsement from their respective Head of Office in lieu of the endorsement issued by the ambassador or consul of the applicant’s home country;
- Terms of Reference or similar document, explaining the purposes of the election observation mission; and
- Proof of Covid-19 vaccination, if necessary based on existing regulations.

Applications with incomplete requirements shall not be processed.

**SECTION 4. *Qualifications for accreditation as observers.*** – Applicants for accreditation as observers must have a *bona fide* intention to participate in the conduct of the 2023 BSKE *exclusively as observers or monitors* of the electoral process, must be *free* from any political, economic or other conflicts of interests that would interfere with conducting observations/monitoring impartially, and must comply with the provisions of Sections 3 and 10 hereof. Applicants are required to disclose their intention to take part in the conduct of the elections as domestic or foreign observers or monitors.

This provision shall not preclude the observers who are Filipino citizens and also registered voters from casting their votes in the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections.

**SECTION 5. *Approval of applications for accreditation.*** – The individual application forms shall be reviewed and evaluated by EID, ORED and OPES, as the case may be.

Approval of applications for accreditation is hereby delegated by the Commission to the:

- a) **Director IV of the COMELEC-EID** - for national media, foreign

media and other media, foreign observers and domestic observers with official addresses in the National Capital Region;

- b) **The concerned Provincial Election Supervisor (PES)** - for local media; and
- c) **The concerned Regional Election Director (RED)** - for domestic observers residing within the provinces in the region.

**SECTION 6. Accreditation of invited observers for the 2023 BSKE International Election Observation Program.** - Individuals who are issued an invitation by the Commission to participate in the COMELEC's International Election Observation Program for the October 30, 2023 BSKE shall automatically be accredited upon confirmation of their participation by registering on the online link indicated in the issued invitation. They are not required to submit the documentary requirements mentioned in Section 3 hereof, except for the photograph.

This shall apply to the following invited individuals:

- a) Foreign nationals who are members of their countries' election management bodies or election administration authorities;
- b) Foreign nationals who are members of their countries' foreign diplomatic service corps and are posted in the Philippines;
- c) Foreign nationals who are affiliated with international organizations, civil society or sectoral organizations that are based outside the Philippines; and
- d) Filipino citizens who are employed or affiliated with international organizations, civil society or sectoral organizations that are based outside the Philippines.

**SECTION 7. Other actions to be taken on applications for accreditation.** - The following actions shall be taken by the concerned office on the following applications for accreditation:

**a) For local media:**

Within seven (7) days from the last day of filing of application for accreditation, the PES shall furnish the EID, via e-mail, a list of all applications received, indicating the status of each individual application, whether approved or denied.

**b) For observers:**

Within seven (7) working days after the deadline, the REDs shall furnish the EID with the final list of applications indicating the status of each individual application, whether approved or denied.

The EID shall furnish the Commission en banc with a list of the approved applications for accreditation and provide the ORED concerned a list of

the foreign observers intending to visit their area for their information and for any appropriate security measures needed.

**SECTION 8. *Media and observer identification card.*** – Upon approval of the application for accreditation, the concerned office where the application was filed shall issue a media or observer card, as the case maybe.

The COMELEC media or observer identification card shall be claimed personally or through an authorized representative from the:

- a) EID, for national media, foreign media and other media, foreign observers and domestic observers with official addresses in the National Capital Region;
- b) concerned OPES for local media; and
- c) concerned RED, for domestic observers residing within the provinces in the region

The media or observer card is strictly non-transferable and is valid only for the purpose for which it was issued. It shall be worn prominently whenever the media or observer is covering or observing any official event relating to the elections.

**SECTION 9. *Access and privileges*** – Duly accredited media and observers shall be allowed access to all stages of the electoral process including preparatory activities subject to such conditions as may be necessary for the protection of COMELEC personnel, property, privileged information, and the integrity of the elections and compliance with the relevant guidelines of Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID). PROVIDED FURTHER, that the COMELEC Accreditation shall not be used to undermine any of the protections mandated by Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

In addition, duly accredited observers shall also have access to all persons concerned with the electoral process, upon reasonable requests, including, but not limited to:

- COMELEC officials, subject to request and availability of the official concerned;
- Members of legislative bodies, security officials and government agencies with functions that are relevant and significant to organizing democratic elections, subject to their availability, policies and other protocols;
- All persons participating in the elections, in whatever capacity; and
- News media personnel.

**SECTION 10. *Code of conduct.*** – All accredited media and observers shall observe the following rules of conduct.

- a) **For media**

1. Respect the authority of the Electoral Board (EB) or Barangay Board of Canvassers (BBOC) with regard to the number of accredited media which shall be allowed inside the polling place or canvassing room at any given time;
2. Immediately identify themselves upon entry into the polling place or canvassing room by presenting their media cards before the EB or BBOC and proof of COVID-19 vaccination, if, and when necessary based on existing regulations;
3. Strictly observe minimum health protocols and safety measures as stated in the relevant guidelines of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID), COMELEC and the concerned local government units;
4. Maintain professionalism at all times. Unprofessional activities shall not be tolerated. The accreditation of any media practitioner found to have engaged in any unprofessional activity shall be summarily revoked by the EB or BBOC where the activity complained of is committed, by confiscating the media card of the offender;

Unprofessional activities shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- Any behavior deemed disruptive of the conduct of voting, counting, or canvassing, such as, but not limited to, conducting interviews inside the polling place or canvassing room;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, which refer to acts designed to promote the election or defeat of a particular candidate or candidates to public office;
- Any behavior intended to unduly influence the choice of voters, such as, but not limited to, directly swaying the voter to speak for or against a candidate;
- Distributing campaign materials;
- Refusal to submit to the authority of the EB, BBOC, or the Department of Education Supervisor Official (DESO) of the voting center where the coverage is being conducted; and
- Any behavior deemed unlawful.

The revocation shall be noted in the Minutes of Voting and Counting, stating therein the reasons therefor.

**b) For observers:**

1. Respect the sovereignty of the Philippines, as well as the human rights and fundamental freedom of its people;
2. Respect the Philippine laws and the authority of the COMELEC and their duly accredited deputies at all times;
3. Follow lawful instructions from the Philippines' governmental and security authorities;
4. Maintain impartiality and objectivity in carrying out the observation/monitoring mission;
5. Refrain from interfering with, obstructing, or otherwise hampering the conduct of any election related activity, including preparatory and post-election activities;
6. Maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including exhibiting sensitivity to the country's cultures and customs, exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time;
7. Prominently display the observer identification card, provided by the COMELEC, at all times; and
8. If necessary, based on existing regulations, strictly observe minimum public health protocols and other prescribed safety measures as stated in the prevailing guidelines of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID), COMELEC and concerned local government units.

**SECTION 11. *Summary revocation of accreditation of observers.*** - The accreditation of any observer/monitor may be summarily revoked by the EB or BBOC by confiscating the accredited observer's ID, and removing him/her or the group from the polling place or canvassing room due to any of the following grounds:

- a) Any violation of the Code of Conduct;
- b) Any disruptive behavior by anyone in the group;
- c) Misconduct which may include but not limited to:
  1. Breaching or attempting to breach the secrecy of the ballot;
  2. Knowingly obstructing electoral proceedings; and
  3. Asking voters about their voting preference while observing at the polling station.

The accreditation of the organizations may also be revoked if it refuses to promptly remove an observer found to be in breach of this Code from their list of nominated individuals.

The power of the Electoral Board or BBOC to remove observers/monitors for misconduct is in addition to their general power to keep order at the polling place or canvassing room.

**SECTION 12. *Period of validity of accreditation.*** - Accreditation shall be valid from the date of approval of the application until November 29, 2023 unless otherwise revoked.

**SECTION 13. *Prohibited acts.*** - It shall be unlawful for any domestic, foreigner, domestic or foreign group, organization, committee or association to:

- a) Aid any person or group of persons in whatever manner, directly or indirectly, relative to the conduct of the elections (Sec. 81 & 89, OEC);
- b) Take part or influence in any manner the conduct of the elections (Sec. 81 & 261 (j), OEC);
- c) Engage in partisan political activities, which refer to acts designed to affect the results of the elections (Sec. 79(b), OEC);
- d) Contribute or make any expenditure in connection with any election campaign or partisan political activity (Sec. 81 & 261 (j), OEC)
- e) Enter any polling place without the consent of the chairman of the Electoral Board concerned (Sec. 192, OEC)
- f) Mingle and talk with voters inside any polling place, or otherwise disrupt the proceedings in the polling place (Sec. 192, OEC);
- g) Threaten, intimidate or actually causes, inflicts or produces any violence, injury, punishment, damage, loss or disadvantage upon any person (Sec. 261 (e), OEC); and
- h) Propagate false and alarming reports or information, transmit or circulate false orders, directives or messages relating to the conduct of the elections (Sec. 261 (z.11), OEC)

**SECTION 14. *Penalty for violation for observers.*** - Any violation of the immediately preceding Section shall be punishable as an election offense which, if found guilty, may be penalized by an imprisonment of not less than one (1) but not more than six (6) years and shall not be subject for probation. In addition, if the guilty party is a Filipino, the offender shall be sentenced to suffer disqualification to hold public office and deprivation of the right of suffrage. On the other hand, if the guilty party is a foreigner, he shall be sentenced to deportation, which shall be enforced after the prison term has been served (Sec. 264, OEC).

**SECTION 15. *Reportorial Requirements of accredited observers.*** Accredited domestic and foreign observers shall submit a report of their observation to the Commission *En Banc*, thru the EID. A template of their reporting shall be provided as a guide for their written report of observations and a conference for this purpose may likewise be called should there be a necessity for one. The deadline of submission of reports shall be on or before November 29, 2023.

**SECTION 16. *Publication and Dissemination.*** The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of these supplemental guidelines in at least two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines. The ITD shall cause the posting of these general guidelines in the official website of the Commission.

**SO ORDERED.**

**GEORGE ERWIN M. GARCIA**  
*Chairman*

**SOCORRO B. INTING**  
*Commissioner*

**MARLON S. CASQUEJO**  
*Commissioner*

**AIRMEE P. FEROLINO**  
*Commissioner*

**REY E. BULAY**  
*Commissioner*

**ERNESTO FERDINAND P. MACEDA**  
*Commissioner*

**NELSON J. CELIS**  
*Commissioner*

**CERTIFICATION**

**APPROVED** by the Commission En Banc during the regular meeting on **July 26, 2023.**

  
**ATTY. CONSUELO B. DIOLA**  
Director IV  
Office of the COMELEC Secretary

This Resolution can be verified at this number (02)85272987; email address [comsec@comelec.gov.ph](mailto:comsec@comelec.gov.ph).