



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SENATE ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL
COA-NCR Bldg., Batasan Road, Quezon City

RESOLUTION No. 16-22

**Guidelines on the Collection and Return
of Ballot Boxes, Election Documents and
Other Election Paraphernalia**

The Senate Electoral Tribunal, as the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns and qualifications of Members of the Senate pursuant to Section 17, Article VI of the Constitution, adopts the following *Guidelines on the Collection and Return of Ballot Boxes, Election Documents and Other Election Paraphernalia*.

I. Pre-Departure

1. Identification of Personnel

Upon issuance of the order / resolution directing the collection or return of ballot boxes, election documents and other election paraphernalia, the Director of Canvass Board Service shall recommend to the Secretary of the Tribunal the personnel who shall compose the pool of Team Leaders and Team Members.

2. Designation of Team Leaders and Team Members

Only Supervising Legislative Staff Officers (SLSOs) and Legislative Staff Officers (LSOs) shall be designated as Team Leaders. Legislative Staff Assistants (LSAs) and Legislative Staff Employees (LSEs) shall serve as Team Members. However, in the exigency of the service, LSAs may be designated as Team Leaders, provided they have had previous experience in the collection / return process.

3. Composition of Teams

A Team shall be composed of male or female employees, who are physically fit as may be determined by the Tribunal Medical Consultant. Each Team shall consist of one (1) Team Leader and at least one (1) Team Member.

The determination of the team composition shall be gender-sensitive and gender-responsive, with due consideration to SET efforts toward gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

In provinces where three (3) or more teams are simultaneously dispatched, a Provincial Coordinator may be assigned to oversee the operations in the province.

4. Training Requirements

Employees who will be deployed as Team Leaders and Team Members must have undergone the following trainings:

- a. Basic First Aid and/or Basic Responder's Course;
- b. Stress Management;
- c. Survival Skills Training and Self-Defense Training, if necessary; and
- d. Basic Gender Sensitivity Training (GST).

Upon the recommendation of the Director of Canvass Board Service, they may be required, or upon the request of the concerned employee, be allowed to undergo a refresher course of any of the foresaid trainings.

5. Gender and Psychological Profiling

The Human Resources Management Service shall facilitate the gender and psychological profiling of the employees who are designated as Team Leaders and Team Members to ensure that only those who show a high degree of stress tolerance shall be deployed to high-risk areas.

In election hot spots and strife-torn areas, the Team(s) shall be referred for stress management and/or crisis mitigation training by subject matter experts prior to their deployment.

6. Pre-Deployment Survey

The Canvass Board Service shall conduct a pre-deployment survey to determine the areas of preference of each duly-designated Team Leader and Team Member and the reasons for such preference. The result of the survey, however, is not an assurance that the Team Leaders and Team Members will be deployed to their areas of preference or that they will not be deployed to other areas not included in their list of preference.

7. Estimate of Expenses

The Canvass Board Service shall prepare an estimate of the expenses to be incurred in the collection / return activity and shall transmit the same to the party-litigant who requested the revision of ballots or to the party-litigant's counsel of record for approval.

8. Bond Coverage for the Special Disbursing Officers

The Team Leader shall be designated as the Special Disbursing Officer (SDO). Such Team Leader shall be bonded in accordance with pertinent government accounting and auditing rules and regulations. The amount of bond coverage shall be based on the estimated expenses and the premium shall be for the account of the Tribunal.

The Canvass Board Service shall coordinate with the Finance and Budget Service for the processing of the necessary documents for the bond coverage of the SDO.

9. Insurance Coverage

Team Leaders and Team Members shall have an insurance coverage in such amount as may be determined by the Tribunal, the premium of which shall be for the account of the Tribunal.

10. Notice of Collection/Return

The Canvass Board Service shall prepare and transmit notices to the Provincial / City / Municipal Treasurers, Election Officers, Provincial Election Supervisors and Provincial Prosecutors serving in the collection / return areas, informing them of the date of the commencement of the collection / return of the ballot boxes and their corresponding keys, election documents and other election paraphernalia involved in the protest, counter-protest or cross protest. Notices shall be couched in gender-fair language and may be transmitted either by: (a) email, (b) snail mail, or (c) telegram.

11. Security Assistance and Expenses

The Canvass Board Service shall prepare and transmit a letter to the Chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) requesting police assistance during the collection / return operations.

In security-risk areas, a request for security assistance shall also be transmitted to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The requests for security assistance shall be couched in gender-fair language.

Expenses for the security of the Team(s) shall be for the account of the party-litigant who requested the revision of ballots.

12. Hazard Pay

Hazard pay which may be granted to the Team Leaders and Team Members in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall be for the account of the Tribunal.

13. Team Accommodations

As far as practicable, the accommodations of the Team(s) shall be arranged by the Canvass Board Service, taking into consideration safety and security as well as gender-related issues. Expenses for the accommodations of the Team(s) shall be for the account of the party-litigant who requested the revision of ballots. Rules and regulations issued by the Commission on Audit (COA), DBM or other regulating agencies shall serve as guide for such expenditure.

14. Meal and Communication Allowance

Each Team Leader and Team member designated to undertake the collection / return activity shall be entitled to a reasonable meal allowance in such amount as may be approved by the Tribunal.

Each Team shall also be allotted a daily communication allowance in such amount as may be approved by the Tribunal.

The meal and communication allowance shall be charged against the party-litigant who requested the revision of ballots and the Team Leaders and Team Members concerned shall not be required to submit the corresponding official receipts therefor.

15. Team Assignment

The Canvass Board Service shall recommend the employees to be assigned as Team Leader and Team Member(s) to each area of operation, taking into account not only the results of the pre-

deployment survey but more importantly, safety and security concerns as well as gender-related issues.

Team Leaders and Team Members who are familiar with the geographic features, dialect, culture and traditions of the place of collection / return shall be given preference in the deployment thereto.

Collection/return operations in Muslim-dominated areas like the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) shall be assigned to male Team Leaders and Team Members; provided, however, that female Team Leaders and Team Members may also be deployed upon their request.

Special concerns like fear of heights, sea sickness, altitude sickness, and the like, shall be taken into consideration in the deployment assignment.

An employee who is designated as Team Leader for the first time shall be paired with a Team Member who had a previous experience in the collection / return process.

16. Schedule of Collection/Return

The Canvass Board Service shall prepare a schedule / itinerary to be followed for the collection / return activity. Such schedule / itinerary shall take into account the order of preference of the party-litigant concerned, availability of designated Team Leaders and Team Members, air / water transportation schedules, local weather conditions and special local holidays and festivities.

17. Mission Order

At least fifteen (15) days before the date of actual departure, the Chairperson of the Tribunal shall issue a Mission Order directing the personnel named therein to collect / return the ballot boxes, election documents and other election paraphernalia in the areas specified therein.

18. Itinerary of Travel

The Team Leader shall prepare an Itinerary of Travel with the corresponding estimated expense per day in accordance with the estimate of expenses approved by the concerned party-litigant.

19. Cash Advance

It shall be the responsibility of the Team Leader as SDO to secure the cash advance covering the estimated cost of collection / return of the ballot boxes, election documents and other election paraphernalia.

Such cash advance shall be charged against the cash deposit of the party-litigant who requested the revision of ballots.

20. Pre-departure Conference With Parties-Litigants

At least two (2) weeks before the scheduled date of collection / return, the Secretary of the Tribunal shall notify the parties thereof and call them to a pre-departure conference for the purpose of discussing the itinerary of travel and the designation by the parties of their respective representatives in the collection / return activity. However, the absence of party representatives shall not deter the Tribunal from undertaking the collection / return activity.

21. Briefing of Teams

The Canvass Board Service shall conduct a pre-departure briefing to orient the Team Leaders and Team Members on matters that will aid them in the efficient and effective performance of their assigned tasks, such as, but not limited to the following:

- a. Number and location of the ballot boxes and election documents to be collected / returned;
- b. Shortest and safest routes and estimated hours of travel;
- c. Estimated cost of the activity;
- d. Permissible use of the contingency budget and the need for daily updates to the Secretary of the Tribunal or Director of Canvass Board Service;
- e. Political landscape of the place of operation;
- f. Observance of cultural and gender sensitivity and the importance of the insights of the local community;
- g. Ailments and diseases peculiar to the area, need for vaccinations / immunizations before deployment, and bringing of sufficient amount of common and maintenance medicines;

- h. Medical facilities in or near the area of operation where the Team(s) can seek treatment in case of illness or accident;
- i. Weather, terrain, and suitable means of transportation in the area of operation;
- j. Necessity and means to safeguard the ballot boxes and election documents from being exposed to environmental conditions like rain, the use of plastic cover for the ballot boxes and election documents during transport to / from island municipalities;
- k. Personal safety and security measures to be undertaken;
- l. Possible critical incidents, whether natural or man-made, that the Team(s) may encounter in their respective areas of operation;
- m. Importance of security briefings from escorts and the practice of the Buddy System;
- n. Ethical and gender-related considerations like avoiding intoxication, places of ill-repute, work-related cases of sexual abuse / harassment; offering jobs to local residents as house helps, laborers or other related work; and other acts which may be deemed unethical or gender-biased; and
- o. Use of proper office attire and decorum, including the use of gender-fair language, while undertaking the collection / return activity.

22. Necessary Documents

The Teams shall obtain and carry with them the following documents:

- a. Certified true copy of the order / resolution directing the collection / return of the ballot boxes and election documents and other election paraphernalia;
- b. Original copy of the Mission Order;
- c. Certified true copies of the notices of collection / return transmitted to the officials concerned;

- d. Copy of the PNP Memorandum directing the chief of the local police to provide escorts and other assistance to the Team(s) during the entire operation;
- e. Copy of COMELEC Resolution No. 2812 dated 17 October 1995, which states, among others, the order of preference in the custody and revision of ballots and election documents;
- f. Office I.D. and SET Secretariat contact numbers;
- g. Health Maintenance Card and List of Accredited Providers; Medical Records and List of Maintenance Medicines;
- h. Estimate of Expenses and Itinerary of Travel;
- i. Map of the area(s) assigned to them;
- j. Necessary Forms: Ballot Box Inventory Form, Election Documents / Paraphernalia Inventory Form, Daily Collection Report Form, Reimbursement Expense Receipt (RER) Form, Acknowledgment Receipt Form, Certificate of Appearance.

23. Emergency Necessities

The Teams shall be provided with emergency kits for their protection, safety and survival in times of natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, mudslides / landslides, storm surges / tsunamis, fires and the like. Medicines for common illnesses shall be included in the kits. The cost of the emergency kits shall be for the account of the Tribunal while personal maintenance medicines shall be for the account of the employee concerned.

Each team shall be provided with a device that will enable the Tribunal to track their whereabouts.

II. Actual Collection/Return

1. Coordination and Courtesy Call

The Team shall, immediately upon arrival in the area of operation, coordinate with the PNP regional / provincial headquarters for security assistance and escorts.

The Team shall attend the security briefing, if any. The itinerary of travel may be adjusted upon recommendation of the PNP or AFP, as the case may be.

Taking into account the political landscape of the place, the Team may or may not pay a courtesy call on the local government officials. In the ARMM areas, however, the Teams are enjoined to make a courtesy call prior to undertaking any activity in any of the localities.

2. Hiring of Handlers and Guides

Only persons of legal age, male or female, shall be hired as Ballot Box Handlers and Guides. No minors shall be involved in any of the activities of the Team, including acting as guides in and around the locality.

3. Inventory-Taking

The Team Leader shall ensure that the inventory-taking is done accurately and the inventory report is complete and properly filled up. The required data must be legibly written.

4. Temporary Ballot Box Storage/Warehouse

The Team shall ensure that the temporary ballot box storage/warehouse is secure. As far as practicable, it should be within or near PNP / military headquarters and other government installations. It should be away from flood and landslide-prone areas and free from fire hazards.

5. Efficient and Prudent Use of Time and Resources

The Teams are expected to maximize the full official hours and to exercise care and foresight in the utilization and management of resources.

6. Daily Report and Supporting Documents

a. Daily Collection/Return Report

The Team Leader shall prepare a detailed daily collection/ return report, written in gender-fair language, indicating therein the municipalities visited, the amount spent for ballot box handlers, trucking and transport services, security assistance, gasoline, and other incidental expenses.

