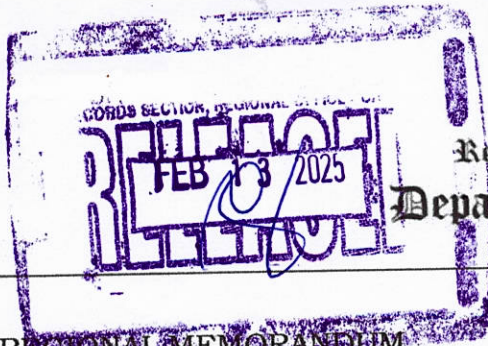




Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
CARAGA REGION

REGIONAL MEMORANDUM
No. **0158**, s. 2025

FEB 13 2025

To: Schools Division Superintendents
All Others Concerned

**DISSEMINATION OF THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ON LOCAL ABSENTEE
VOTING IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAY 12, 2025 NATIONAL AND LOCAL
ELECTIONS**

1. This refers to the conduct of Local Absentee Voting for the May 12, 2025 National and Local Elections, particularly the implementation of Comelec Resolution No. 11091, which outlines the Rules and Regulations on Local Absentee Voting.
2. To ensure all DepEd personnel are well-informed on how they may avail of the Local Absentee Voting system, the dissemination of the aforementioned COMELEC Resolution to your respective stations is highly encouraged. Additionally, copies of the said Resolution may be reproduced or downloaded from the COMELEC website at www.comelec.gov.ph.
3. Immediate dissemination to all concerned is highly encouraged.

MARIA INES C. ASUNCION
Director IV
Regional Director *ang*

Encl.: COMELEC RESOLUTION NO. 11091
Reference: None
To be indicated in the Perpetual Index
under the following subjects:
ELECTION

ORD/jmm
02/04/2025



COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
ECAD-OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Date: 01-08-25

Time: 11:11am

Received by: *[Signature]*

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

RULES AND
REGULATIONS ON
LOCAL ABSENTEE
VOTING IN
CONNECTION WITH
THE MAY 12, 2025
NATIONAL AND
LOCAL ELECTIONS.

GARCIA, George Erwin M.
INTING, Socorro B.
CASQUEJO, Marlon S.
FEROLINO, Aimee P.
BULAY, Rey E.
MACEDA, Ernesto Ferdinand, Jr. P.
CELIS, Nelson J.

Chairman
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

X-----X

PROMULGATED: January 3, 2025

RESOLUTION NO. 11091

The Commission on Elections (Commission), pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code (OEC), Executive Order No. 157, Republic Act (R.A.) No. 7166, R.A. No. 10380, and other pertinent election laws, **RESOLVED**, as it hereby **RESOLVES**, to promulgate the following rules and regulations on local absentee voting:

SEC. 1. Definition of terms. - the following terms are hereby defined as follows:

- a. **Local absentee voting** - refers to a system of voting whereby government officials and employees, including members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the Philippine National Police (PNP) as well as members of the media, media practitioners including their technical and support staff (media voters) who are duly registered voters, are allowed to vote for national positions; i.e., Senators and Party-List Representatives, in places where they are not registered voters but where they are temporarily assigned to perform election duties on election day, or in case of media voters who will not be able to vote due to the performance of their functions in covering and reporting on the elections;
- b. **Media** - refers to those who are engaged in news reporting on a nationwide or local scale, including correspondents of

national, regional, provincial, city, or municipal publications or broadcast entities, or those engaged in other forms of journalism and their technical and support staff.

SEC. 2. Automated System of Elections. -The local absentee voting shall adopt the automated system of elections where the counting and canvassing are done through the Automated Counting Machine (ACM) and the Canvassing and Consolidation System (CCS).

SEC. 3. Election Forms and Supplies. - The following forms shall be used for purposes of the LAV:

- a. Official LAV Ballots
- b. LAV Form No. 01 - Application to Avail Local Absentee Voting
- c. LAV Form No. 02 - Sworn Certified List of Applicants for Local Absentee Voting
- d. LAV Form No. 03- Report of Verification of Registration
- e. LAV Form No. 04 - List of Approved Applicants for Local Absentee Voting with Minutes of Voting
- f. LAV Form No. 05-Notice of Disapproval
- g. LAV Form No.06 -Transmittal and Receipt of Accountable and Non-Accountable Forms and other Election Paraphernalia
- h. LAV Form No.07 - Transmittal of Accomplished Ballots and Other Election Paraphernalia
- i. LAV Form No.08-Notice to the Election Officer on Applicants Voting Through Local Absentee
- j. LAV Form No.08-A - Notice to the Election Officer of Applicants Who Actually Voted Under the Local Absentee Voting System
- k. LAV Form No. 09 - Appointment of Chairman/Poll Clerk/Member/Substitute
- l. LAV Form No. 10 -Oath of Members of SEB
- m. LAV Form No. 11 - Minutes of Counting of Votes
- n. LAV Form No. 11-B - Minutes of Canvassing

On the other hand, the following supplies shall be used for the LAV:

- a. Outer Envelopes
- b. Inner Envelopes
- c. Paper Seals
- d. Envelopes
- e. Marking Pens
- f. Ballot Boxes
- g. Comelec Padlocks
- h. Plastic Security Seals

SEC. 4. Who are entitled to avail of local absentee voting. – Local absentee voting may be availed of by the following:

- a. Government officials and employees including Members of the PNP and AFP; and
- b. Members of the media and media practitioners including their technical and support staff who are actively engaged in the pursuit of information gathering and reporting or distribution, in any manner or form, including, but not limited to the following:
 - i. Print Journalists;
 - ii. Television Journalists;
 - iii. Photo Journalists;
 - iv. Online Journalists;
 - v. Radio Journalists;
 - vi. Documentary makers;
 - vii. Television/Radio Production;
 - viii. Bloggers;
 - ix. Freelance Journalist.

provided a) they are duly registered voters and whose registration records are not deactivated, and b) on election day, **in case of government officials and employees including members of the PNP and AFP**, that they are assigned temporarily to perform election duties in places where they are not registered voters; or **in case of media voters**, that they will not be able to vote due to the performance of their functions in covering and reporting on the conduct of elections.

Government officials and employees who will be posted abroad to perform election duties on election day may also avail of local absentee voting, provided, that they are registered voters under R.A. No. 8189, otherwise known as "The Voter's Registration Act of 1996" and that they are not registered overseas absentee voters under R.A. No. 9189, as amended by R.A. No. 10590, otherwise known as "The Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2013".

SEC. 5. Where and when to file the application forms to avail of the local absentee voting. – Applicants who will avail of the local absentee voting shall file their duly accomplished *LAV Form No. 01a* and on the following:

APPLICANT/S	WHEN TO FILE	WHERE TO FILE
a. For government officials and employees, members of the AFP, and members of the PNP.	Not later than March 7, 2025.	Before their heads of offices/supervisors/commanders/officers next-in-rank.
b. For media voters.	Not later than March 7, 2025.	i. Office of the Regional Election Director (ORED) of

		the National Capital Region (NCR) for highly urbanized cities in the NCR including the Municipality of Pateros; ii. Office of the City Election Officer (OCEO) for highly urbanized or independent cities outside the NCR; iii. Offices of the Provincial Election Supervisor (OPES) for areas not mentioned above; * The application form for media voters must be accompanied by a certification accomplished by the heads of media entities to whom the applicants belong attesting that they are <i>bona fide</i> members of the media entity and that they may not be able to vote due to the performance of their functions in covering and reporting the conduct of elections. (LAV Form No. 02) For freelance journalists who do not work full time for any media company but were hired by different media companies for election coverage, they must present a Certification under oath stating that they have valid assignments from the <i>bona fide</i> media organization, attaching proof of such fact. For Online Publishers, they must present corresponding Certifications under oath stating that they are actively in pursuit of gathering and distributing online election content, indicating thereto the URL of the online publication or blog showing their names or
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		listing the applicants as part of the reporting team for that site. In case of any <u>willful giving of false information</u> or <u>misrepresentation</u> in the <u>Certifications submitted</u>, the <u>applicants shall be charged with applicable offense</u> under <u>pertinent laws and regulations</u>.
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For purposes of the local absentee voting for media voters, hereunder is the list of highly urbanized and independent cities:

Highly Urbanized Cities in NCR (file with ORED-NCR)	Highly Urbanized Cities outside NCR (file with City EO)	Independent Cities (file with City EO)
Caloocan City Las Piñas City Makati City Malabon City Mandaluyong City Manila City Marikina City Muntinlupa City Navotas City Parañaque City Pasay City Pasig City Quezon City San Juan City Taguig City Valenzuela City Including Municipality of Pateros	Angeles City Bacolod City Baguio City Butuan City Cagayan de Oro City Cebu City Davao City Gen. Santos City Iligan City Iloilo City Lapu-Lapu City Lucena City Mandaue City Olongapo City Puerto Princesa City Tacloban City Zamboanga City	Cotabato City Naga City Ormoc City Santiago City

In cities outside NCR where there are more than one (1) OCEO, the Regional Election Director (RED) shall designate the OCEO which shall receive the applications to avail of the local absentee voting not later than **January 27, 2025**.

For this purpose, the RED concerned shall submit the list of designated OCEO to the Committee on Local Absentee Voting (CLAV), through the Director IV, Electoral Contests Adjudication Department (ECAD).

SEC. 6. Date, Time, and Place of Voting. – Local absentee voting shall be conducted on **April 28, 29 and 30, 2025** from **8:00 o'clock in the morning** until **5:00 o'clock in the afternoon**.

For government officials and employees, including members of the AFP and PNP, the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank shall designate the place of voting **not later than April 12, 2025**, with written notice to the Municipal/City/District EO who or whose representative will supervise the conduct of voting. Copy of said written notice shall be furnished to the CLAV. The heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank shall ensure that the place of voting so designated shall be final.

For media voters, voting shall be at the COMELEC Office where they filed their applications for local absentee voting under the supervision of the City Election Officer (CEO), Provincial Election Supervisor (PES) or RED as the case may be.

SEC. 7. Positions to be voted for. – For the May 12, 2025 National and Local Elections (NLE), only the positions of Senators and Party-List Representatives shall be voted for under the local absentee voting.

SEC. 8. Committee on Local Absentee Voting. – There shall be created a Committee on Local Absentee Voting ("CLAV") consisting of the officers and staff of the ECAD from whom a Head assisted by an Assistant Head and three (3) Members shall be designated by the Chairman of the Commission.

To effectively carry out the mandate of the CLAV, Local Absentee Voting Groups (LAV Groups), shall be constituted by the Committee to process the applications coming from different regions and from the media.

The Information Technology Department (ITD) shall provide the CLAV with the updated National List of Registered Voters (NLRV) and other technical assistance in the verification of registered voters, installation, operation and troubleshooting of the ACMs and CCS.

SEC. 9. Powers and Functions of the CLAV. – The CLAV, through the LAV Groups, shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Distribute copies (hard or electronic copy) of *LAV Form No. 01* to all government agencies, AFP, PNP, media entities, corporations or members of the media concerned;
- b. Receive accomplished original *LAV Form No. 01* together with original *LAV Form No. 02* for local absentee voting not later than **March 10, 2025**;
- c. Verify whether the applicants are eligible for local absentee voting not later than **April 8, 2025**;

d. Prepare **LAV Form No. 04** per office/unit/battalion/OCEOs/OPES/ORED-NCR;

e. Send by Electronic mail (E-mail) **LAV Form No. 08** to all Municipal/City/District EOs concerned, and copy furnished their respective PES and the REDs, before elections but not later than **April 21, 2025**;

Upon receipt of the List, the EO concerned shall annotate in the Election Day Computerized Voters List (EDCVL) that said voters are **"Voting Through the Local Absentee Voting System"**;

For this purpose, the concerned Municipal/City/District EOs shall submit to the CLAV via E-mail, a report of their compliance within five (5) days from receipt, copy furnished their respective PES and RED;

f. Transmit the following to all concerned heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank/CEOs/ PES/RED-NCR, not later than **April 21, 2025**;

i. LAV Form No. 04;

ii. LAV Form No. 05; and

iii. The exact number of local absentee ballots, inner and outer envelopes and paper seals corresponding to the number of approved applicants;

g. Constitute Special Electoral Boards (SEB), Reception and Custody Group (RCG) and Special Board of Canvassers (SBOC) for local absentee voting not later than **April 29, 2025**;

h. Receive the envelopes containing the accomplished local absentee ballots and other related documents from the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, the CEOs, PES, or the RED-NCR, as the case may be, **on or before 7:00 o'clock in the evening (7 P.M.) of May 11, 2025**. Ballots received beyond the deadline shall no longer be counted.

i. Verify whether the number of envelopes containing the accomplished ballots is equal to the number of signatures affixed in the list submitted (**LAV Form No.**

04) by the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank/ the CEO/PES concerned or the RED-NCR, as the case may be;

If there are more envelopes containing the accomplished ballots than the signatures affixed on the list, set aside the envelope of the voter whose signature does not appear in the list and place the same in a separate ballot box intended for the purpose. Such fact shall be indicated in a report to be prepared by the LAV Group concerned which shall be submitted to the CLAV. Said ballots shall not be counted;

If there are more signatures affixed in the list than the number of envelopes received, such fact shall likewise be indicated in the report to be prepared by the LAV Group which shall be submitted to the CLAV. The report shall indicate the names of the voters whose signatures appear in the list, but without corresponding envelopes. In this case, the CLAV, through the Head of the LAV Group concerned, shall direct the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, the CEO/PES concerned or the RED-NCR, as the case may be, to transmit the envelopes of said voters;

After receipt and verification thereof, the inner envelope shall be removed from the outer envelope, and thereafter turn-over the same, including a copy of accomplished *LAV Form No. 4*, to the RCG;

- j. Supervise the counting of ballots and canvassing of votes;
- k. Receive, through the RCG, all ballot boxes containing the counted ballots and related election documents from the SEBs and SBOC for local absentee voting, for safekeeping;
- l. Send by E-mail, *LAV Form No. 08-A*, to all Municipal/City/District EOs concerned, copy furnished their respective PES and REDs for updating of their voting records to prevent the deactivation thereof, after elections but not later than **June 30, 2025**. A hard copy of said written Notice shall be sent to all EOs immediately thereafter;

For this purpose, the concerned Municipal/City/District EOs shall submit within five (5) days from receipt of the above notice, a report to the CLAV, copy furnished their respective PES and REDs, of their compliance thereto; and

- m. Perform and exercise such other functions and powers as may be necessary for the proper implementation of the local absentee voting law.

SEC. 10. Procedures for filing of applications to avail of local absentee voting. -

- a. All persons who intend to avail of the local absentee voting shall personally accomplish their *LAV Form No. 01* and file the same as provided for under these rules.

All application forms shall be under oath. For purposes of this resolution, the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank may administer oaths, free of charge, for government officials and employees/members of AFP/PNP.

For media voters, their application forms shall be sworn to before:

- i. any notary public; or
- ii. the RED-NCR for highly urbanized cities of NCR including the Municipality of Pateros; or
- iii. the CEO concerned for highly urbanized cities outside NCR; or
- iv. the PES for areas other than those mentioned above.

The application forms may be reproduced or downloaded from the official COMELEC website at www.comelec.gov.ph.

- b. The heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, shall receive all accomplished and subscribed application forms from their respective personnel **not later than March 7, 2025.**

In case of media voters, the CEO or PES concerned, or the RED-NCR, shall receive all accomplished application forms together with the *LAV Form No. 02* accomplished by the heads of the media entities to whom the applicants belong or the Certifications under oath in case of freelancers and online publishers. If the application form is filed personally by the applicant before the CEO or PES concerned, or the RED-NCR, the same shall be sworn to before the said Officer, otherwise, the same shall be sworn to before a Notary Public;

- c. The heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank shall prepare *LAV Form No. 02* indicating therein the Municipality/City/District, barangay and precinct number where they are registered, and the place of their assignment on election day, with a certification that the applicants will be re-assigned on election day to perform election-related duties; or in case of media voters, that they may not be able to vote due to the performance of their functions of covering and reporting the conduct of elections;
- d. Not later than **March 10, 2025**, the heads of offices/supervisors/ commanders/officers next-in-rank, the CEO or PES concerned or RED-NCR, as the case may be, shall submit directly to the CLAV either by personal service or private courier, the **original copies** of the following:
 - i. *LAV Form No. 2* indicating therein the Municipality/City/District, barangay and precinct number where they are registered and the place of their assignment on election day, with a certification that the applicant/s will be re-assigned on election day to perform election-related duties; or in case of media voters, that they may not be able to vote due to the performance of their functions of covering and reporting the conduct of elections; and
 - ii. The accomplished *LAV Form No. 01* of all the applicants.

The foregoing documents shall be transmitted directly to the CLAV, c/o the ECAD, 8th Floor, Palacio

Del Gobernador, General Luna St. Intramuros,
Manila, immediately upon receipt thereof but not
later than March 10, 2025.

Any queries on the foregoing may be made at
telephone numbers (02)8527-2986, (02)8529-2212,
(02)8536-0419, (02)8524-2312 and (02)8527-0830 or
email address at ecad@comelec.gov.ph.

SEC. 11. Verification of registration of applicants for local absentee voting.
- Upon receipt of the *LAV Form No. 02* and the accomplished *LAV Form No. 01*, the
CLAV shall verify from the NLRV provided by ITD, whether the applicants are
registered voters, and generate a Report thereon (*LAV Form No. 03*).

Only the applications of individuals whose names are in the NLRV shall be
approved by the CLAV.

The CLAV shall thereafter prepare *LAV Form No. 04*.

Once approved, applicants should ensure that they will vote on any day from
April 28 to 30, 2025 as they are no longer allowed to vote in their regular precincts
since they are already included in the certified list of local absentee voters, and that
in the Election Day Computerized Voters List (EDCVL), they are indicated as voting
through local absentee voting system.

In case of double or multiple voting, the applicant shall be charged with an
election offense as defined under paragraph z, subparagraph 2 of Sec. 261 of the
OEC and shall be recommended to be administratively charged, if applicable.

SEC. 12. Disapproval of the application to avail of local absentee voting. -
The application (*LAV Form No. 01*) to avail of local absentee voting shall be
disapproved on the grounds that:

- a. the names of the applicants are not found in the NLRV;
- b. the application was filed out of time;
- c. the accomplished application form or the list is not
under oath;
- d. the accomplished application form is only a
photocopy/facsimile copy; and/or
- e. the Certification portion of *LAV Form No. 02* is not duly
accomplished.

For this purpose, the CLAV shall notify the heads of
offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, the CEO or PES or the
RED-NCR who shall in turn notify the concerned applicants on the disapproval of

their application to avail of the local absentee voting (*LAV Form No. 05*) provided however, that for items c, d and e above, the application forms of those found to be registered voters may be completed/complied with and submitted back to CLAV on or before the deadline of preparation of the list of qualified local absentee voters on April 8, 2025.

SEC. 13. Transmittal of list of qualified local absentee voters, local absentee ballots and other election forms and supplies from the CLAV. - The CLAV, through its members, shall personally transmit to the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders, CEO, PES or RED-NCR, the *LAV Form No. 04*, the exact number of local absentee ballots, marking pens, inner and outer envelopes and paper seals corresponding to the number of approved applications using *LAV Form No. 06* not later than April 21, 2025 to ensure that the above-mentioned election forms and supplies will be received by the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders, CEO, PES or RED-NCR before the voting period.

If, before the transmittal of the ballots to the approved applicants, there is a change of the applicants' place of assignment, the concerned heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank shall inform the CLAV of such change so that the said ballots will be sent to their new stations. If the change of venue, however, happens after the ballots were already transmitted, it is the responsibility of the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank concerned to send these ballots to their re-assigned personnel whose application were approved.

SEC. 14. Final Testing and Sealing of ACMs. - On any scheduled day from May 8, 2025 to May 10, 2025, the SEBs shall convene at the designated counting venue to test and seal the ACMs assigned to the CLAV.

The SEBs shall observe the following procedures for the FTS of the ACM:

- a. Explain to those present the purpose of and the procedures for the FTS;
- b. Set up the ACM and perform the ACM diagnostic by following procedure (1) to (14) of the general instructions for ACM Operations;
- c. Start the voting process by following procedure (15) to (17) of the general instructions for ACM Operations;
- d. Randomly choose ten (10) persons, from among those present, who will accomplish the ballots to be used for FTS. If there are less than ten (10) persons present, any of them may accomplish more than one (1) ballot to complete the ten (10) ballots.

To accomplish the ballots, the Chairperson shall give each of the ten (10) persons a ballot inside the ballot secrecy folder and a marking pen. Using the marking pen, they shall accomplish the

ballot by fully shading the circle opposite the names of the candidates, including that of the party, organization, or coalition participating in the party-list system of representation. Thereafter, they shall return the accomplished ballot inside the ballot secrecy folder and the marking pen to the Chairperson.

- e. The Chairperson of the SEB shall:
 - i. Examine the accomplished ballot and determine whether the circle opposite the names of the candidates/political parties participating in the party-list system have been fully shaded; and the security features (timing marks, barcodes, and QR codes) have not been damaged;
 - ii. Return the accomplished ballot inside the ballot secrecy folder and give the same to the voter who shall personally feed the accomplished ballot into the ACM;
 - iii. Instruct the persons to verify the votes as appearing on the VVPAT and place the same in the VVPAT receptacle;
 - iv. Perform the same procedures in (i), (ii), and (iii) above until all ten (10) ballots are fed into the ACM's ballot entry slot;
- f. Follow the instructions on the closing of polls and the printing of election returns after all the ten (10) ballots have been fed into the ACM's ballot entry slot;
- g. Conduct Manual Verification of Results observing the following procedures:
 - i. The SEBs shall retrieve the accomplished ballots from the ballot box, manually count the votes therein, and accomplish the manual ERs provided for the purpose.
 - ii. The Chairperson shall verify the ballots to determine whether there is over-voting (when the number of votes for a position exceeded the number of ballots). If there is an over-vote in a position, no vote shall be counted in favor of any candidate for the said position;
 - iii. The Chairperson shall take the ballots one by one, and read the names of the candidates voted for and

the position for which they were voted to, in the order in which they appear thereon;

- iv. The Poll Clerk shall record on the manual ER the vote as the names voted for each position are read. Each vote shall be recorded by a vertical line, except every fifth vote which shall be recorded by a diagonal line crossing the previous four vertical lines;
- v. After finishing the ten (10) ballots, the Poll Clerk shall determine the total number of votes obtained by each candidate;
- vi. The SEB shall sign the certification portion of the ERs generated by the ACM, manually prepared ERs, and the VVPAT audit report;
- vii. The SEB shall compare the results derived from the ERs generated by the ACM, the manually prepared ERs, and the VVPAT Audit Report;

If the results are the same, perform the re-zero procedure, and shut down the ACM following the steps in the general instructions for ACM Operations.

If the results are not the same, the SEB shall re-appreciate the ballots and review the VVPAT to determine the discrepancy. If there is still a discrepancy, the SEB shall call on the assigned technical support staff for technical assistance. The technical support staff shall report such incident to the Chairperson of the CLAV.

Once the discrepancy is resolved, perform the re-zero procedure, and shut down the ACM following the steps in the general instructions for ACM Operations.

In no case shall there be transmission of votes done during the FTS of ACM; and

- viii. Place the counted ballots, VVPAT, manually-prepared ERs, ACM-generated ERs, VVPAT Audit Report, and all other reports generated by the ACM, in the envelope provided for the purpose.

- h. The SEB shall record in the Minutes (*LAV Form No. 11*) all the acts or data required to be entered under this Resolution as soon as they occur or become available;
- i. After the FTS, the SEB shall:
 - i. Ensure that the ACM is placed in the ACM case which should be properly sealed and secured. Thereafter, leave the ACM case, ballot box, VVPAT receptacle, and external battery inside the polling place or any secured room in the voting center;
 - ii. Submit to the CLAV the Envelope for Counted FTS Ballots, FTS Election Returns, and Other Reports (A17-FTS) containing the following and seal the same with a paper seal (CBF No. A12):
 - ii.1. Diagnostic Report;
 - ii.2. Initialization Report;
 - ii.3. Nine (9) copies of Election Returns;
 - ii.4. Manual ER;
 - ii.5. Counted ballots;
 - ii.6. VVPAT; and
 - ii.7. VVPAT Audit Report.

The CLAV shall keep the above documents until further instructions from the Commission.

For the May 12, 2025 NLE, the CLAV shall give notice of the date, time and place of the FTS, at least five (5) days before the day of the FTS, to all senatorial candidates, duly registered political parties or coalition of political parties which has nominated national candidates, sectors and organizations participating under the party list system, and accredited citizen's arms.

After the FTS, the ACMs shall not be opened until the close of polls for the May 12, 2025 NLE.

SEC. 15. Security envelopes for local absentee ballots. – There shall be two (2) security envelopes for each local absentee ballot, namely, an outer envelope and an inner envelope.

The inner envelope shall contain the accomplished official ballot and shall not bear any other mark except an indication that it is a special envelope for a local absentee ballot. This shall be placed inside the outer envelope.

The outer envelope shall have a space for the name and signature of the voter.

SEC. 16. Procedures for voting. – On any day on April 28 to 30, 2025 from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon, the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders concerned, shall distribute the local absentee ballots, envelopes, paper seals, and other election forms and supplies to the qualified local absentee voters and shall:

- a. Require the voters to affix their signatures opposite their names in the *LAV Form No. 04* prepared by the CLAV under **Section 11** hereof;
- b. Write the ballot ID and the serial numbers of the ballot and of the two (2) paper seals opposite the names of the voters in the spaces provided in the list;
- c. Authenticate the ballot by affixing his/her signature at the designated space at the front of the ballot;

Failure to authenticate the ballot shall not invalidate it but shall constitute an election offense.

- d. Show to the voter that the ballot being given is not torn or smudged, and has not yet been filled-out;
- e. Place such ballot inside the ballot secrecy folder;
- f. Give the ballot secrecy folder containing the ballot and the marking pen to the voter with the instruction that the ballot shall be kept clean and free from unnecessary markings (*i.e.*, smudge/stain from thumbprint-taker, food stains, and the like);

Only one ballot shall be issued to a single voter.

- g. Give to the voters the inner and outer envelopes and the two (2) paper seals;
- h. Instruct the voters to immediately accomplish the ballot in accordance with **Section 17** hereof.
- i. Direct the voter to fill-out the ballot in the designated voting area;
- j. Ensure that the ballot is placed inside the inner envelope which shall in turn be placed inside the outer envelope. Check that the outer envelope contains the name of the voter;
- k. Collect from the voter the envelopes containing the accomplished ballot, ballot secrecy folder and marking pen;
- l. Advise the voter to leave the polling place after voting.

The distribution shall be under the direct supervision and presence of the Municipal/City/District EOs or their representatives, or in case of media voters, the CEOs/PES or RED-NCR or their representatives.

SEC. 17. Manner of Voting. - The local absentee voters shall:

- a. Use a ballot secrecy folder and the marking pen provided by the Commission;
- b. Accomplish the ballot by *fully shading the circle* appearing before the names of their chosen candidates for Senators and the organizations participating in the party-list system of representation;
- c. Place the accomplished ballot inside the inner envelope, and close and seal the envelope with a paper seal;
- d. Write the ballot ID as indicated on the ballot outside the inner envelope and place the sealed inner envelope inside the outer envelope, which shall likewise be sealed with a paper seal;
- e. Write their names and affix their signatures on the space provided for in the outer envelope; and
- f. Submit the sealed envelope to the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, EOs, the PES concerned or RED-NCR, as the case may be.

The heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, CEOs, the PES concerned or RED-NCR, shall ensure that the sanctity of the voting process is preserved.

SEC. 18. Submission of accomplished local absentee ballots and other election documents to the CLAV. - After the voting, the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, the CEO or PES concerned or the RED-NCR, as the case may be, shall:

- a. Gather all the sealed envelopes containing the ballots submitted to them by the local absentee voters;
- b. Prepare, in two (2) copies, *LAV Form No. 07* with a certification on the number of accomplished ballots collected by them. They shall submit one (1) copy thereof to the CLAV and retain the other copy for their file; and
- c. Transmit the sealed envelopes, together with a) *LAV Form No. 04* with signatures referred to in Section 16(a); and b) unused official ballots torn in half, to the CLAV by the fastest means available

c/o the ECAD, COMELEC, 8th Floor, Palacio del Gobernador, General Luna St. Intramuros, Manila, ensuring that the ballots are received by the CLAV Group concerned not later than 7:00 o'clock in the evening (7 P.M.) of May 11, 2025.

SEC. 19. Disposition of Unused Ballots. – After the voting, the heads of offices/supervisors/commanders or officers next-in-rank, the CEO or PES concerned or the RED-NCR, as the case may be, shall:

- a. Record in the Minutes the quantity of unused ballots;
- b. Tear the unused ballots in half lengthwise and submit to CLAV together with the accomplished ballots;
- c. Place one half of the torn ballots in the *Envelope for Rejected Ballots, Half of Torn Unused Official Ballots and Other Half of Torn Unused Official Ballots* (CEF No. A16), and submit said envelope to the EO for safekeeping; and
- d. Place the other half in another *Envelope for Rejected Ballots, Half of Torn Unused Official Ballots and Other Half of Torn Unused Official Ballots* (CEF No. A15) and then deposit the same inside the ballot box. Such fact shall be entered in the Minutes.

SEC. 20. Reception and Custody Group (RCG), duties and functions. – The CLAV shall constitute an RCG not later than April 29, 2025, which shall:

- a. Receive the verified envelopes containing the accomplished ballots including the detached outer envelopes from the LAV Groups concerned;
- b. Collate the inner envelopes based on the ballot ID, then place the verified inner envelopes inside the ballot boxes at the rate of one thousand (1,000) envelopes per ballot box;
- c. Place the outer envelopes in separate ballot boxes;
- d. Store in a safe and secured place the ballot boxes prior to the distribution to the SEBs; and
- e. Deliver the ballot boxes immediately at the close of polls for the May 12, 2025 NLE to the SEBs for counting.

SEC. 21. Special Electoral Boards (SEBs). – The CLAV shall constitute, not later than April 29, 2025, as many SEBs as may be deemed necessary, to conduct the Final Testing and Sealing of the ACMs and administer the electronic counting of the local absentee ballots. The SEBs shall likewise be responsible and accountable for all the ACM kits received pursuant to the checklist inside the ACM case while the same are in their custody. The members thereof shall be chosen from among the

personnel of ECAD. In case of lack of ECAD personnel, the CLAV shall constitute additional SEBs from among the personnel of other departments/offices of the Commission.

To determine the number of SEBs to be constituted, the CLAV shall use as basis the total number of approved applications at a ratio of one thousand (1,000) ballots per SEB. In case the CLAV constituted more SEBs than what is required, the SEBs last in the order of numbering may be deactivated.

For every ten (10) SEBs, the Chairperson shall designate one supervisor who will supervise the counting.

SEC. 22. Oath of Members of SEB. - Before assuming their office, the Chairperson and Members of the SEB shall take and sign *LAV Form No. 10* before any officer authorized to administer oaths. Copies of the *LAV Form No. 10*, which has been sworn under oath, shall immediately be submitted to the CLAV.

SEC. 23. Notice of Counting. - For the May 12, 2025 NLE, the CLAV shall give notice of the date, time and place of counting, at least five (5) days before the day of the election, to all senatorial candidates, duly registered political parties or coalition of political parties which has nominated national candidates, sectors and organizations participating under the party list system, and accredited citizen's arms.

SEC. 24. Proceedings of the SEB. - The SEB shall:

- a) Meet at the place designated by the CLAV at 6:00 o'clock in the morning (6 A.M.) on May 12, 2025;
- b) Commence the counting of votes 8:00 o'clock in the morning (8 A.M.) of May 12, 2025 of polls; and
- c) Adjourn only after the counting is completed.

All proceedings of the SEB shall be done in public. It shall act through its Chairperson and all questions presented before it shall be decided without delay by a majority vote of the members. During its meetings, not more than one (1) member shall be absent at the same time, and in no case shall such absence be for more than twenty (20) minutes.

SEC. 25. Manner of counting local absentee ballots. - Upon receipt of the ballot box containing the security envelopes for local absentee ballots, the SEB shall proceed with the counting as follows:

Before the counting:

- a. Retrieve the inner envelopes containing accomplished ballot/s from the ballot box. If there are envelopes containing a different ballot ID, the same shall be forwarded to the proper SEB;

- b. Open the inner envelopes and retrieve the ballots found therein;
- c. File the ballots; Ensure that the ACM box and the ballot box are inside the polling place;
- d. Show to the watchers and the public present that the:
 - i. ACM case is sealed;
 - ii. Ballot box is empty and thereafter, lock the same with plastic security seals; and
 - iii. Break the paper seal of the ACM case;
- e. Open the ACM case and check if the following are deposited inside:
 - i. The ACM;
 - ii. Power cord with adaptor of the ACM and battery cable;
 - iii. Remaining rolls of thermal paper;
 - iv. The three (3) Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) for operating the ACM, the three (3) smart cards, and one (1) PIN for re-zeroing;
 - v. The checklist of the contents of the ACM box;
 - vi. USB modem with SIM card and one (1) contingency SIM card;
 - vii. Cleaning sheet;
 - viii. Marking Pens; and
 - ix. One (1) paper seal for ACM box (A12-B) to be used at the end of Election Day to close the ACM box.
- f. Retrieve the smart cards and security PINs from the ACM case and distribute the same among themselves. The RE-ZERO PIN shall remain inside the ACM case;
- g. Bring out the ACM and show to the public that the compartment containing the main and back-up storage devices is sealed;
- h. Perform the ACM operations in accordance with the general instructions for ACM Operations.

During the counting:

- i. The Chairperson shall feed the accomplished ballot in the ACM's ballot entry slot then take the printed VVPAT and deposit the VVPAT in the VVPAT receptacle;
- j. The watchers and the public shall not touch any of the said election documents and equipment.

After all the ballots have been fed to the ACMs:

- k. The SEB shall close the voting by performing the procedures provided in the general instructions for ACM Operations.
- l. After printing all the thirty (30) copies of the ERs and all reports, and before performing the back-up procedure, the SEB shall perform the following:
 - i. Open the VVPAT receptacle and retrieve all VVPATs;
 - ii. Manually count the VVPAT and record the same in the Minutes;
 - iii. Perform the ballot review as laid down in the general instructions for ACM Operations;
- m. Remove the main storage device from the ACM and place it inside the envelope (A18-B). The EB shall also indicate on the envelope the SEB Number. *The Back-up storage device shall not be removed from the ACM, and the cover of the ACM's storage device compartment shall remain locked;*
- n. Place the initialization report, precinct statistical report, and audit logs in their corresponding envelopes (A18-C to A18-E);
- o. Shut down the ACM in accordance with the general instructions (GI) for ACM Operations;
- p. Disconnect the following:
 - i. Power cable of the ACM from the electrical outlet;
 - ii. Battery from the ACM;
 - iii. Battery cables from the battery; and
 - iv. Power cable from the ACM.
- q. Place the smart cards and PINs in the ACM case;
- r. Place the battery inside the ACM box;
- s. Place the power cord and the battery cables inside the ACM case;
- t. Close the ACM case then place it in the ACM box and cover the ballot box with packaging tape by wrapping the tape around the cover and extending it to the upper part of the ballot box. The SEB shall affix their signatures on the tape and require the watchers present to also affix their signatures; and
- u. Turn over to the Secretariat for verification the ACM box, including all other AES-related equipment using the same checklist provided for the purpose. In case there are lacking items in the checklist, the SEB shall be required to produce the same, otherwise, they shall be held liable for

their equivalent cost, without prejudice to the filing of appropriate charges.

After all the ballots have been read:

- v. The proceedings of the SEB shall be recorded in *LAV Form No. 11* to be accomplished in two (2) copies which shall be placed in separate sealed envelopes to be distributed as follows:
 - i. The first copy, to the Election Records and Statistics Department (ERSD), this Commission; and,
 - ii. The second copy, to be deposited inside the ballot box compartment for valid ballots.

SEC. 26. Rejected Ballots; Procedure. - Ballots may be rejected by the ACM during the scanning. There are four (4) different types of messages when the ACM rejects a ballot:

- a. Misread Ballot - When a ballot has not been scanned properly; in this case the SEB shall re-feed the ballot in four (4) different orientations;
- b. Previously Read Ballot - When a ballot with the same ballot ID number was already scanned;
- c. Invalid Ballot - When the ballot is not configured to the ACM; and
- d. Fake Ballot - when security markings are not present in the ballot.

If the ballot is still rejected, the Chairperson shall:

- i. Distinctly mark the back thereof as "**REJECTED;**"
- ii. Require all members of the SEB to sign at the back thereof; and
- iii. Place the rejected ballot inside the Envelope for Rejected Ballots.

Any party objecting to the rejection of the ballot shall reduce his objection in writing, which the SEB shall note in the Minutes for the ballot.

SEC. 27. Disposition of Election Returns - After printing the (ERs), the SEB shall sign and affix their thumbmarks in the certification portion of all copies of the ERs. Thereafter, the SEB shall post one (1) copy of the ER.