

## **Right to Vote: A Human rights Violation in the Philippines**

**Dr. Alhadzmar A. Lantaka**

Faculty

School of Education, Arts and Science

Universidad de Zamboanga

Zamboanga City, Philippines

Right to vote and be voted is a constitutional rights of every citizen in the Philippines as contemplated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. A question must be asked, is the right to vote is observed as constitutional right in the Philippines? Is the Filipino politician respect the constitutional rights of the electorate? And finally, is the electorate allows the politician to violate their constitutional rights?

Today politics in the Philippines particularly in the Southern part of the country fails to observe the constitutional rights of the electorate. The mode of election in the southern part of the country does not anchor on the qualifications set forth by the fundamental law of the land. As shrined in the constitution, a person to be elected in the office must have the qualifications such as citizenship, residency, able to read and write and age. Unfortunately, the law of the land was not properly interpreted in the southern part of the country as far election is concerned. Let us not forget the principle of constitutional construction and interpretation, if the law is clear, it does not require interpretation but instead to implement it. As practiced, it is not anymore confine on the qualification as indicated in the fundamental law instead, electorate and politician illegally amended and augmented money is one of the major qualifications to be in the position. Thus, this kind of unconstitutional practices was slowly accepted by the people in the selected areas in the southern part of the Philippines. It is sad to note, there are qualified people to be in the position but they don't anymore aspire to be elected because they lack qualification which is money to buy the vote.

The qualified candidate has comprehensive campaign program for their constituents but the electorate has also counter campaign program which is, No Money, No Vote. This kind of unconstitutional proposal becomes the culture of every registered voter to elect candidate. The other qualification as stipulated in the constitution becomes secondary in choosing their local official instead of focusing on the qualifications as contemplated in the fundamental law. With this, we are electing candidate who is not qualified and fitted in the position but because they have enough resources to buy the vote of every registered voter. Therefore, we can conclude, the bigger the money you spent in the election the greater chances of winning. In fact, one of the presidential aspirants publicly announced, you need billion of money to join the presidential race. Thus, it is a lucid indication of human rights violation which the government should take an initial step to design a massive campaign to educate the electorate as to manner of electing person to be in the office. This is irrelevant and immaterial in the point of law which needs to be rectified for a better Philippines.

As an offshoot of the counter campaign program of the electorate, the politician already harassed the rights of the every electorate during the election in manner of buying their votes by way of bidding. Hence, the candidate will no longer present their program instead of joining the bid which was organized by the community leaders for their own interest. This is not only a simple violation of human rights instead a clear harassment of the rights of the every registered voters which whoever the highest bidder as practice in the market will own your vote. It is sad to note that politician started to level each family with corresponding price. Thus, the essence of the constitutional rights to vote is practically deleted in the present politics in the southern part of the Philippines.

In conclusion, right to vote is a human rights violation in the Philippines. The vote buying is rampant for the local officials in the southern part of the Philippines. This kind of unconstitutional practices was religiously organized by the electorate themselves as part of the constitutional qualification to select the leaders of their own community. The massive counter campaign program of the electorate on No Money, No vote was taken seriously by the candidates. Thus, every candidate aspiring for position simply prepare for the bidding not for their program for the benefit of body politics.