



What Is This Module About?

Can you still remember the previous presidential election? Did you exercise your right to vote? Whom did you vote for?

Do you know why we have elections? Do you think elections are necessary? How are they important to you?

You will know the answers to all the questions above by studying this module. This module will also help you recognize your rights and responsibilities as a Filipino citizen. It will further discuss in detail your right to vote in any election, be it local or national. It is hoped that you will value and exercise wisely your right to vote.

This module is divided into two lessons:

Lesson 1 — *Why Are Elections Important?*

Lesson 2 — *What Are Your Rights During Elections?*



What Will You Learn From This Module?

After studying this module, you should be able to:

- ◆ identify the importance of elections in preserving democracy in a democratic society;
- ◆ enumerate the duties and responsibilities of a voter; and
- ◆ exercise wisely your political rights during elections, such as:
 - the right to vote,
 - freedom of expression, and
 - the right to due process of law.



Let's See What You Already Know

Below are some situations. Analyze carefully each one of them. Put a check mark (✓) in the blank before each situation which you think is legal or conforms to election laws. Put an X-mark (X) before each situation which you think is illegal or violates existing laws.

Number 1 is done for you as an example.

1. The mayor of San Roque did not allow Aling Maria's son, who was only 14 years old, to register for the elections.
2. Sarah went to her hometown to register for the coming election.
3. Mang Ponso brought a truckload of non-residents to vote in their barangay elections.
4. A few hours after the election, a group of armed men stole the ballot boxes.
5. The people of Mapayapa City questioned the appointment of their new mayor. They told the media that they were not informed about the sudden replacement of their former mayor.
6. The mayor of Tagumpay City refused to endorse a businessman who is running for governor even though the businessman is a close friend of the mayor.
7. With bravery and courage, the chairman of the board of canvassers ordered a man, who was distributing money in envelopes to those waiting to vote, to stop what he was doing and leave the precinct.
8. Mang Porong is known for his honesty. In the previous election, he refused money offered by a congressman who asked him to change his party affiliation.
9. Mr. Patalinhug, a political leader, refused to use the blank ballots given to him by a candidate who is desperate to win the election.
10. The voters of Barangay Masantol voted for the candidate who they thought deserved their votes, despite the threats of their mayor.

Well, how was it? Do you think you fared well? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 26 to find out.

If all your answers are correct, very good! This shows that you already know much about the topic. You may still study the module to review what you already know. Who knows, you might learn a few more new things as well.

If you got a low score, don't feel bad. This means that this module is for you. It will help you to understand important concepts that you can apply in your daily life. If you study this module carefully, you will learn the answers to all the items in the test and a lot more! Are you ready?

You may go now to the next page to begin Lesson 1.

Why Are Elections Important?

Do you know what distinguishes a democratic society from other societies? One answer is its form of selecting and/or replacing people in power. In a democratic society, it is said that the majority rules. It is the people's collective action that decides the future of their nation. The people have a say on issues concerning economy and politics, specifically governance. And it is believed that through **election**, a process of selection by casting votes, the people are able to take an active role in deciding who should lead them. This is a very important aspect of democracy.

Have you observed that here in our country, there are separate elections for the different levels and positions? There are national and local elections. In this lesson you will learn more about these. You will also learn the importance of having elections.



Let's Study and Analyze

In every society, the selection of leaders is very important. Leaders are those who deserve the trust of their people.

Read and analyze the following dialogue.

Marco: Hey, I've heard that we have a new mayor.

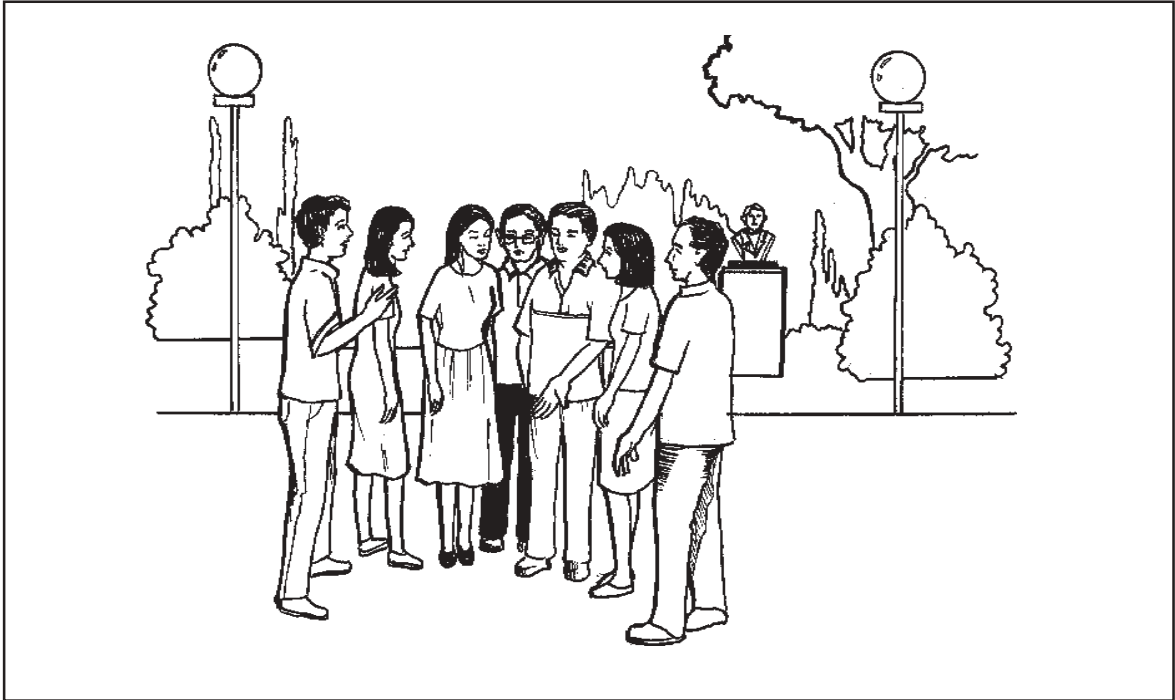
Rafael: Really? I didn't know.

Nadia: Since when did he assume office?

Marco: Just today. I've heard that he's a close friend of our former mayor.

Noel: Ahhh... no wonder why.

Nadia: I thought Carding would be the next mayor... he is very responsible, you know.



Rafael: Yeah, we all know that. But we do not have any right to meddle with the government.

Noel: You are right. We will always have the same kind of administration and the same people in power. No progress will really happen in our town because the people in power have secured authority. Never will we be able to decide for ourselves.

Nadia: That is why they are becoming richer and richer while we are becoming poorer.

Rafael: It is important that we unite and demand that we be given the right to participate in the selection of our leaders.

All: Right!!!



Let's Try This

Have you finished reading the dialogue? If you have, try answering the following questions:

1. What is the conversation of Marco, Rafael, Nadia and Noel all about?

2. How did they react to the appointment of their new mayor?
-
-

Were you able to answer the questions above? If so, compare your answers with mine:

1. The conversation is about their new mayor. Their new mayor was not elected into office, but was appointed by the former mayor because he was his close friend.
2. The people were not in favor of the appointment of the new mayor. At first, they felt helpless because they thought they did not have any right to join the selection of government officials. In the end, they decided that they should fight for their right to be able to choose their own leader or mayor.

Did you get the answers right? I'm sure you did. If not, it's okay. You can learn more as you continue with the next activity.



Let's Think About This

Elections are truly important in choosing our leaders. They exemplify the true meaning of democracy. They show that it is the people as a whole, and not just one person or a few persons, who decide for our country. Elections also show the extent to which Filipinos value their right to directly participate in affairs of the state. It is the people who choose the right leaders for them.

What problems can we encounter when we do not have the right to elect our leaders?

There are many problems that could arise if there were no elections. Among these are:

- ◆ The person in power could dictate whatever he/she liked for the country. He/She could also appoint anyone whom he/she wished to appoint. He/She could appoint his/her family members, relatives, friends, business partners, etc.
- ◆ Because the person in power is the only one who could decide and implement the laws, there is a big possibility that he/she would stay in power for as long as he/she wants. He/She could easily abuse his/her power. Then it is easy for him/her and his/her family and friends to engage in graft and corruption. This means that they would use the money and resources of the government for their own personal needs.

- ◆ The people could do nothing but follow the leader. The leader could exploit them because even if they were abused, it would be impossible for them to file complaints because of the huge power the leader held.
- ◆ There would no longer be a democratic form of government. Instead, the government would resemble a monarchy, in which a king rules.



Let's Try This

In your barangay, conduct an interview with a barangay official (he/she may be a former or current official). Ask him/her about the importance of having elections using the questions below. Follow the steps in conducting an interview, which are also found below. Write the official's answers in the blanks provided.

Step 1. Introduce yourself and tell the barangay official the reason why you are conducting the interview. Tell him/her that you are eager to learn more about elections.

Step 2. You may start the interview. Remember to write the name and position (former or current) of the official you are interviewing in the space below.

Interviewee: _____

Position: _____

Questions:

1. How long have you been a barangay official?

2. Were you elected into office? If so, what do you think are the reasons the people voted for you?

3. Do you think having elections is important? Why or why not?

4. How can you encourage the people to participate in elections?

Show what you have written down to your Instructional Manager or Facilitator. Discuss with him/her the importance of elections. If this is not possible, you may instead share and discuss your findings with a family member, friend or co-learner.

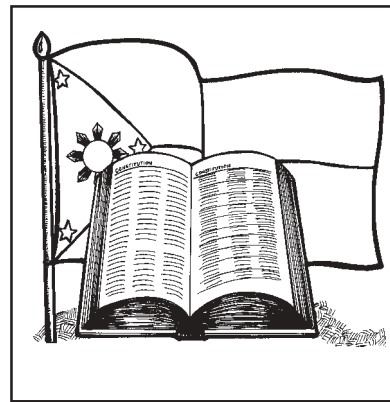


Let's Read

YOU ARE IMPORTANT

Most of the time an ordinary person thinks that he/she is just a citizen and the nation's leaders are more important than him/her. But if you really think about it, it is us, the ordinary citizens, who have greater power and responsibility to decide for our nation.

It is clearly stated in the Philippine Constitution that as a democratic state, the power and authority belongs to the people. The Constitution states that: "The Philippines is a republican and a democratic State. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them." This means that the future of our country lies in our hands, as Filipino citizens, and all government authority comes from us.



Our "sovereignty" or authority as Filipino citizens is exercised in periodic elections where we directly choose our national and local leaders. From the president down to the last member of *barangay sanggunians* (village councils), all elective officials are directly elected by the people. Regular elections are held every three years but in between these are barangay elections, *Sangguniang Kabataan* (youth council) elections, and the regional elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The national elections include the elections for president, vice-president, senators and congressmen. Presidential elections are held every six years. Elections for senators and congressmen, on the other hand, are held every three years. It is important to note that we have twenty-four (24) senators. The senators who are able to win the top twelve (12) positions during national elections get to serve a six-year term. The next set of senators serve a three-year term.

Meanwhile, local government officials are elected during local elections. Local elections are also held every three years.



Let's See What You Have Learned

In your own words, explain the meaning of the provision in our Constitution that states: “The Philippines is a republican and a democratic State. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them.” Discuss this in terms of the importance of elections as a process of selecting our leaders.

Compare your answer with that in the *Answer Key* on page 26.



Let's Remember

- ◆ As a democratic nation, we hold elections to select our leaders. Having elections ensures that the people exercise their right to choose the leaders whom they think deserve their votes. It is very important that the Filipino people participate actively in elections so that they can decide what is best for them.
- ◆ It is also important to remember that we conduct national and local elections for the different major positions in the government.
 - National elections are elections for president, vice president, senators and congressmen.
 - Presidential elections are held every six years. Elections for senators and congressmen are held every three years.
 - Local government officials are elected during local elections. Local elections are held every three years.

What Are Your Rights During Elections?

Do you know that as a Filipino citizen, you have political rights and responsibilities? Among these are your right and responsibility to vote and to safeguard your vote. You do not have to feel less important regarding matters that concern politics. You have a big role to play.

In this lesson, you will learn more about the importance of your right to vote. You will learn that it is your responsibility as a Filipino citizen to exercise this right properly. You will also learn about your political rights, such as your right to freedom of assembly and expression.





Let's Read

Read the following story about two political candidates. Analyze the situation carefully. Afterward, answer the questions that follow.

In a town in the suburbs of Manila, the incumbent mayor and a doctor were both running for mayor in the local election. The parties of the two candidates campaigned aggressively. The competition was very stiff. A few days before the election, it seemed that the doctor was leading the race. This angered the incumbent mayor.

During the election, five ballot boxes were forcibly taken from the precincts, allegedly by the incumbent mayor's men.

Later, during the canvassing of votes, the incumbent mayor was declared the winner. The voters, alarmed by the result, filed a resolution addressed to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) requesting for an investigation. The COMELEC granted their request. A voter identified those who took the ballot boxes and testified against them.

Results of the investigation showed that there was a miscalculation of votes because of the threats received by the watchers from the incumbent mayor's armed men.

The case went to the Supreme Court. It took two years to resolve. Finally, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the doctor. Thus, the doctor was able to take his rightful place as the truly elected mayor of the people.





Let's Review

Analyze carefully the facts of the case and then answer the following questions.

1. Do you think the voters did the right thing in questioning the election results? Why? If you were a voter who witnessed irregularities during the elections, would you do the same? Explain your answers.

2. How did the government show that it is serious in implementing the laws and the provisions of the Constitution?

3. What lessons or insights can we learn from the decision of the Supreme Court?

Compare your answers with those found in the *Answer Key* on page 27.

Did you get the right answers? If so, congratulations! In case you have some wrong answers, just continue reading the module to learn more of your rights during elections.



Let's Listen To This

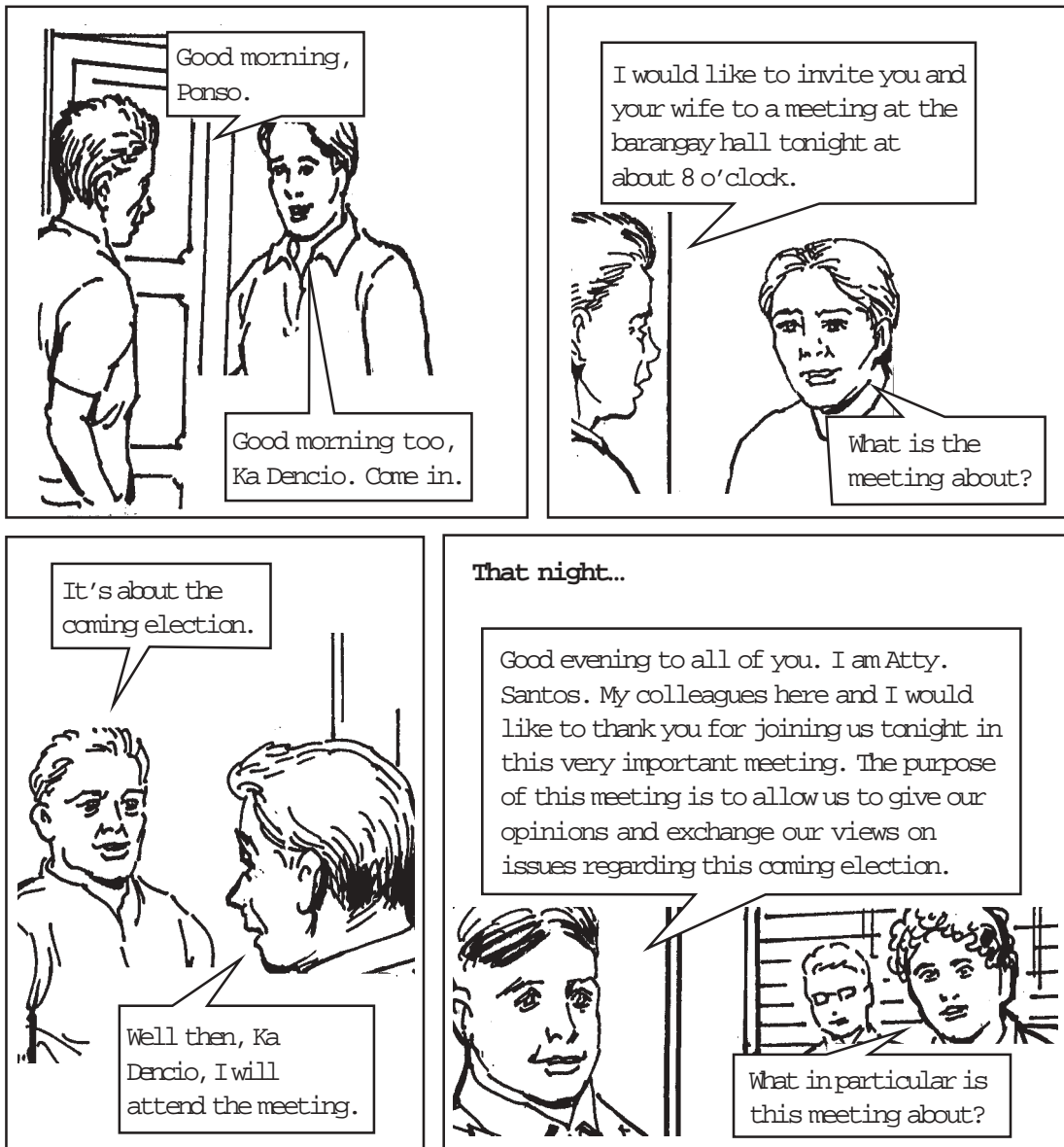
Do you know of your rights during elections and how important these are? If not, listen to the audio tape entitled “In a Barangay Assembly.” Listen carefully and analyze the message being presented. If you do not have access to a tape recorder, just read through the dialogue on the following pages.

In a Barangay Assembly

Characters:

Atty. Santos, 45 years old
Ka Dencio, 60 years old
Ben, 60 years old
Rosa, 32 years old
Ponso, 41 years old
Bert, 36 years old

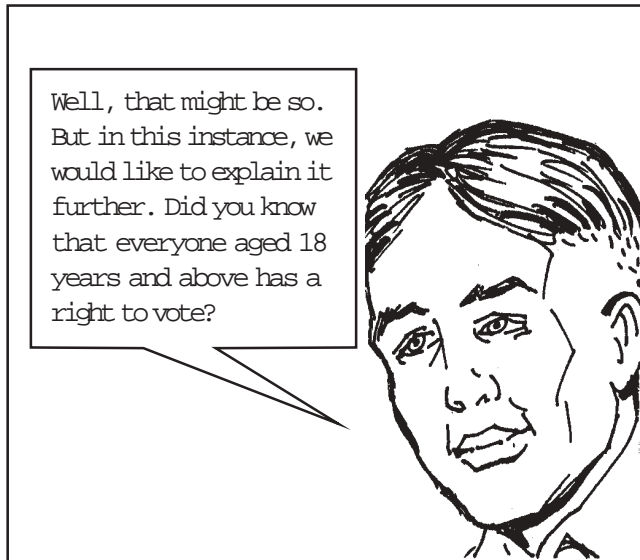
Goryo, 50 years old
Linda, 30 years old
Karyo, 59 years old
Male voices
Female voices



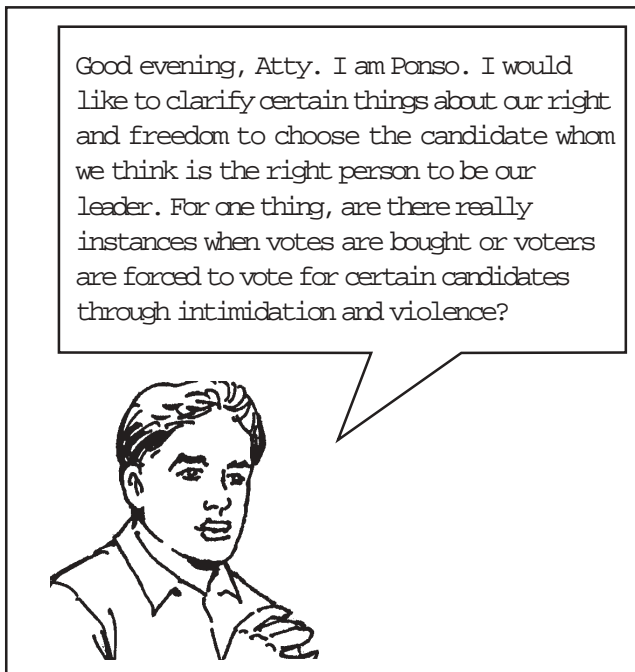


It is about our right to vote.

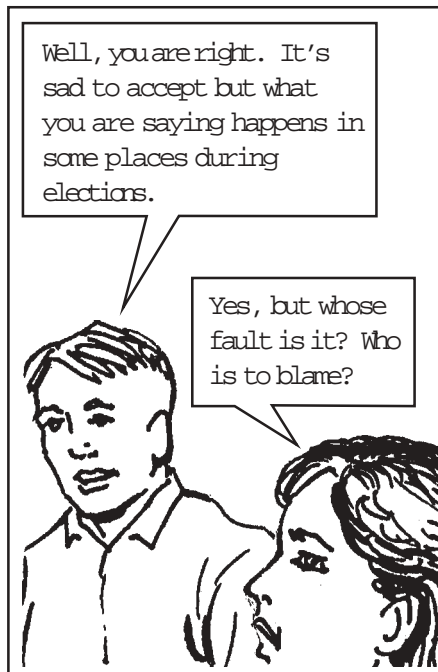
Oh! We already know all about that!



Well, that might be so. But in this instance, we would like to explain it further. Did you know that everyone aged 18 years and above has a right to vote?

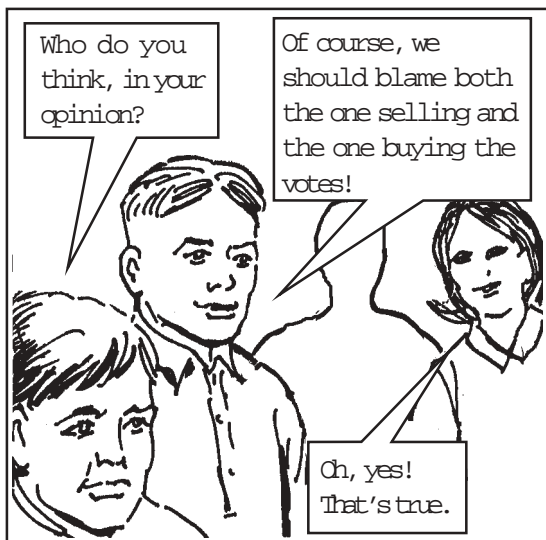


Good evening, Atty. I am Ponso. I would like to clarify certain things about our right and freedom to choose the candidate whom we think is the right person to be our leader. For one thing, are there really instances when votes are bought or voters are forced to vote for certain candidates through intimidation and violence?



Well, you are right. It's sad to accept but what you are saying happens in some places during elections.

Yes, but whose fault is it? Who is to blame?



Who do you think, in your opinion?

Of course, we should blame both the one selling and the one buying the votes!

Oh, yes! That's true.



Those who resort to violence to get votes could be a candidate himself or his political followers.

We should not allow this to happen in our barangay, not ever!

If we unite in protecting the ballots, incidents like these can be avoided and disregard for the rule of law will not happen.

I beg your pardon, Atty. Santos. I am Goryo.

If you please, you may come forward, Mang Goryo.

I'd just like to confirm if those who are 18 years and above are entitled to vote?

You are correct, Mang Goryo.

Yet I have seen voters as young as fifteen years old who were able to vote in the previous election!

Are you sure that they were that young? Couldn't they have been just young-looking.. like myself?!

No! I'm sure they were just minors.. about the age of my youngest son!

Well! We should be vigilant in watching them this coming election. We will not allow it to happen again.

That's right. Underaged persons should not be allowed to vote, according to the provision of our Constitution. That's why we should not allow it.

Also, there are violators called flying voters.

They are voters who cast their votes in different voting precincts. There are also those who vote even though they are already American citizens.

You're right. Not only that. Some *balikbayans* are flying voters too!



Balikbayan. Americans! How could *balikbayans* become Americans, Linda? Do they change the color of their skin because they reside in the land of snow?

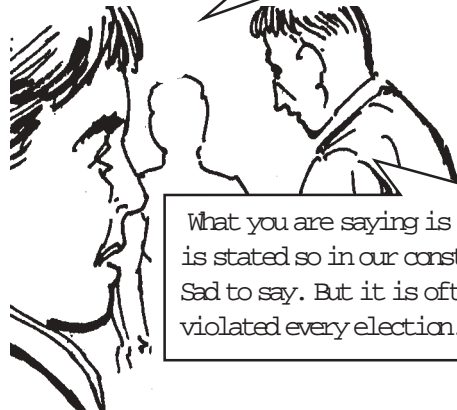
Kuya Bert, they are Filipinos but because they have legitimately stayed for five continuous years in the United States, they were able to acquire American citizenship. This makes them Americans, right?

What I know, Linda, is that they still have the right to vote in the land of their birth even if they have stayed long in other countries where they have sought employment.



Oh yes, but they do not really intend to stay permanently there..like my father.

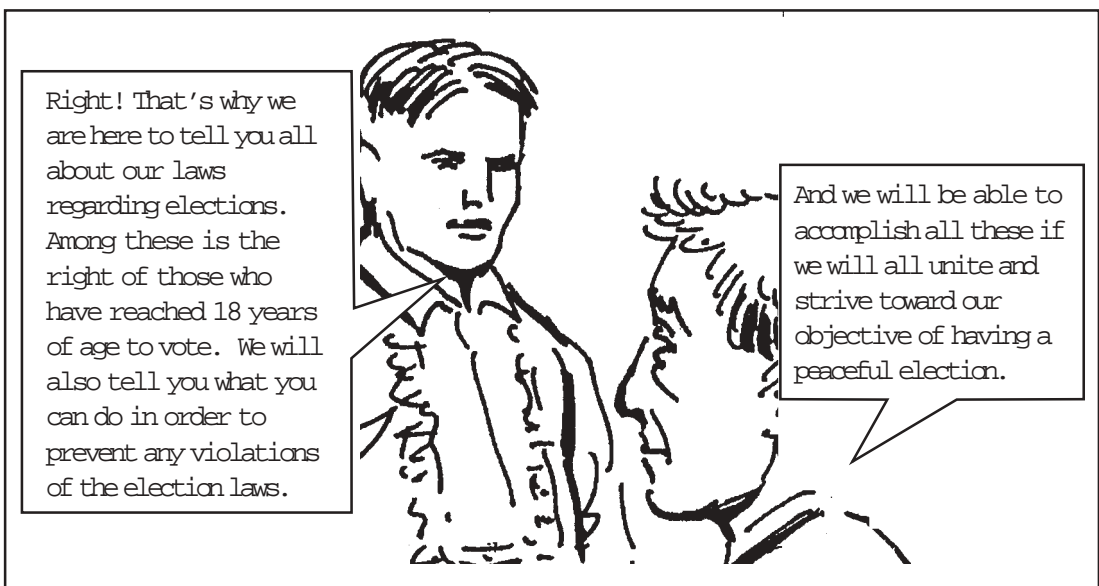
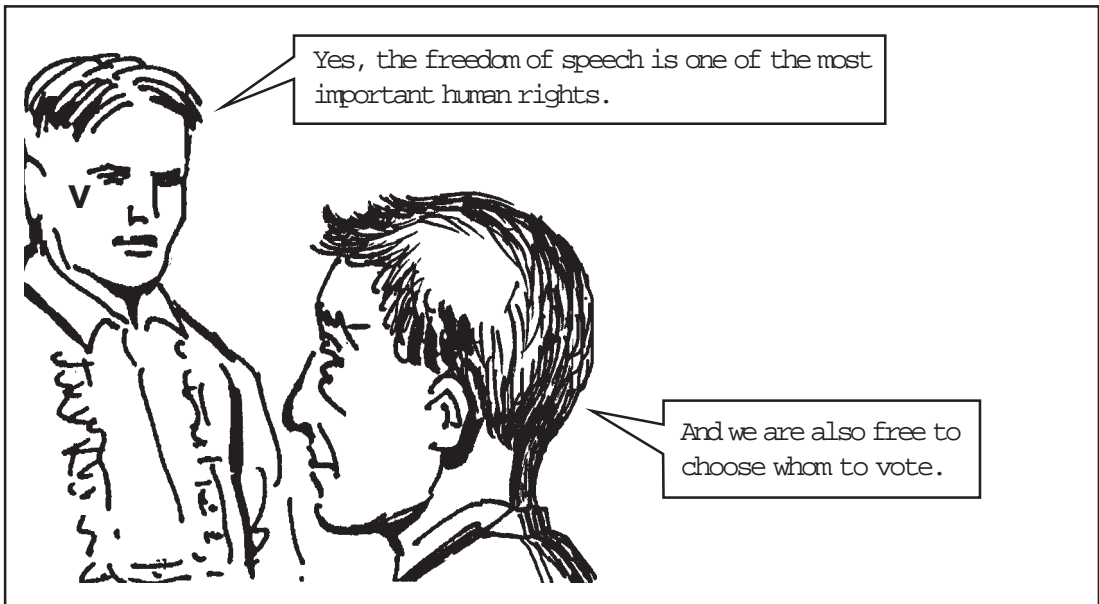
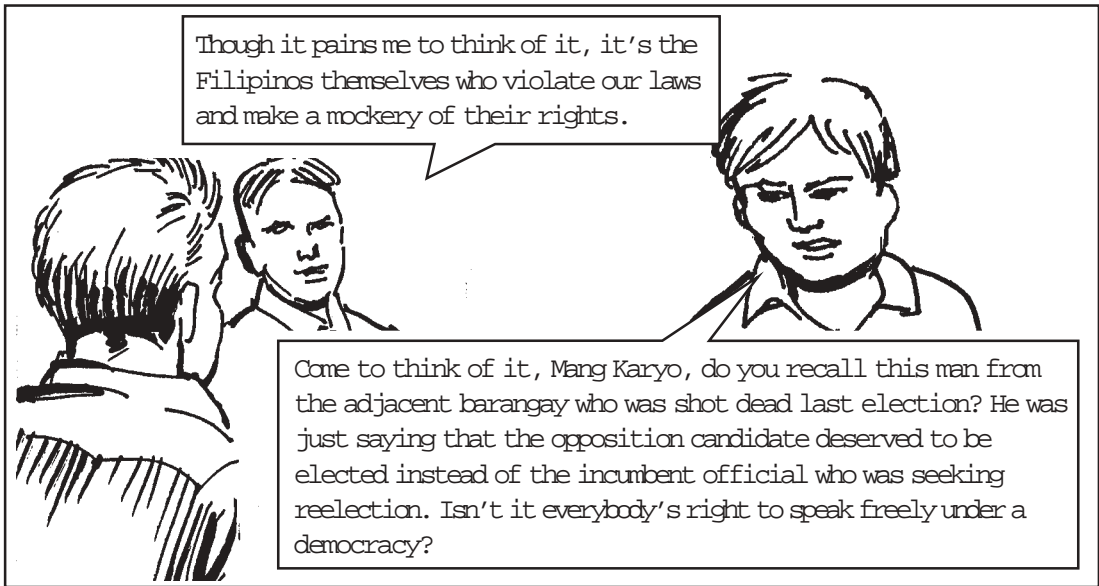
It means that, if they are in America, they are Americans, but if they are here, they are Pinoys!

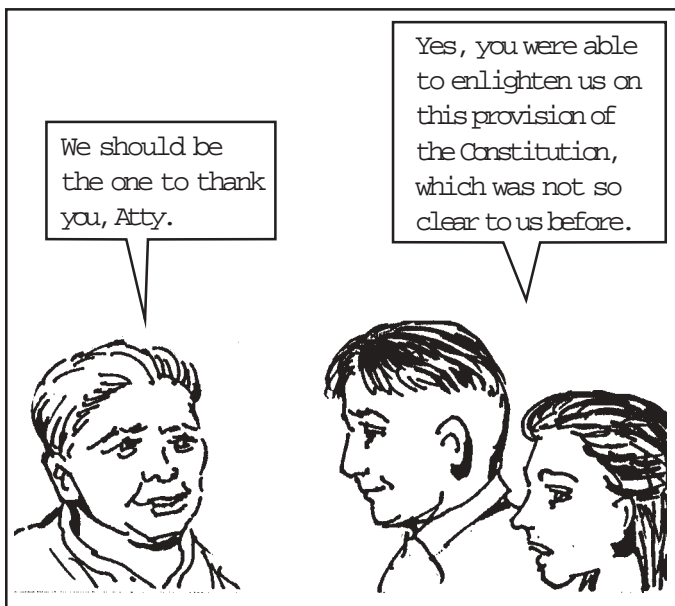
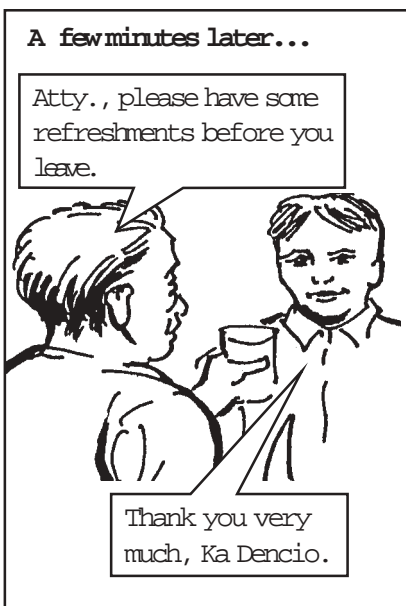
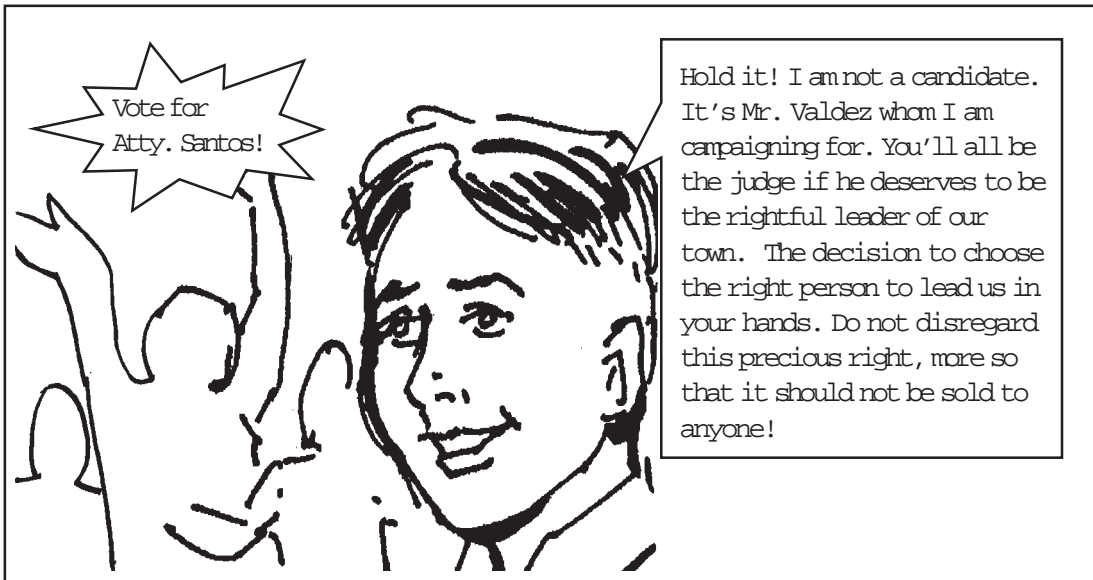
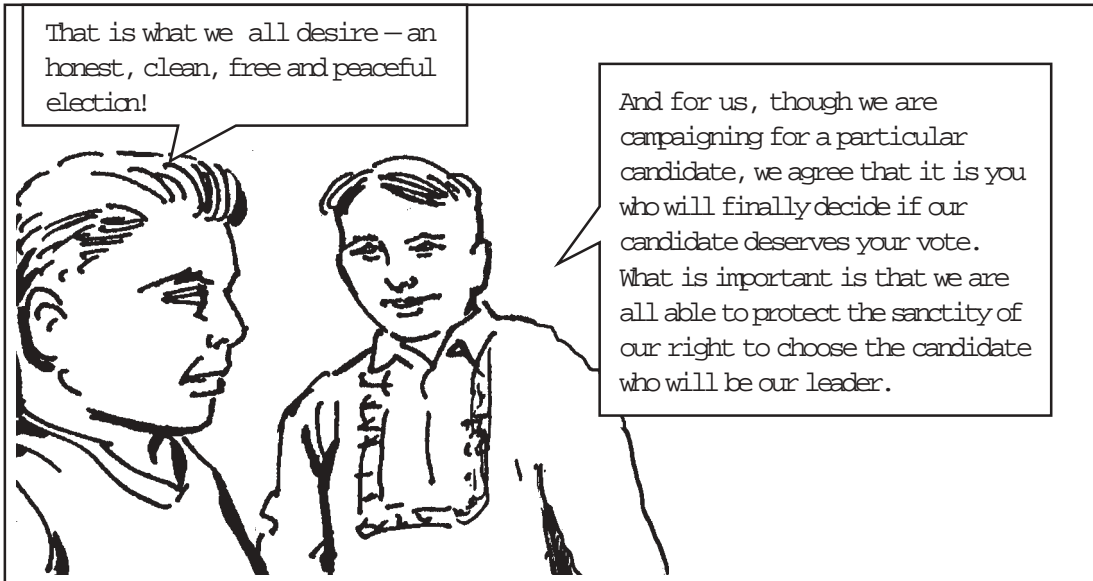


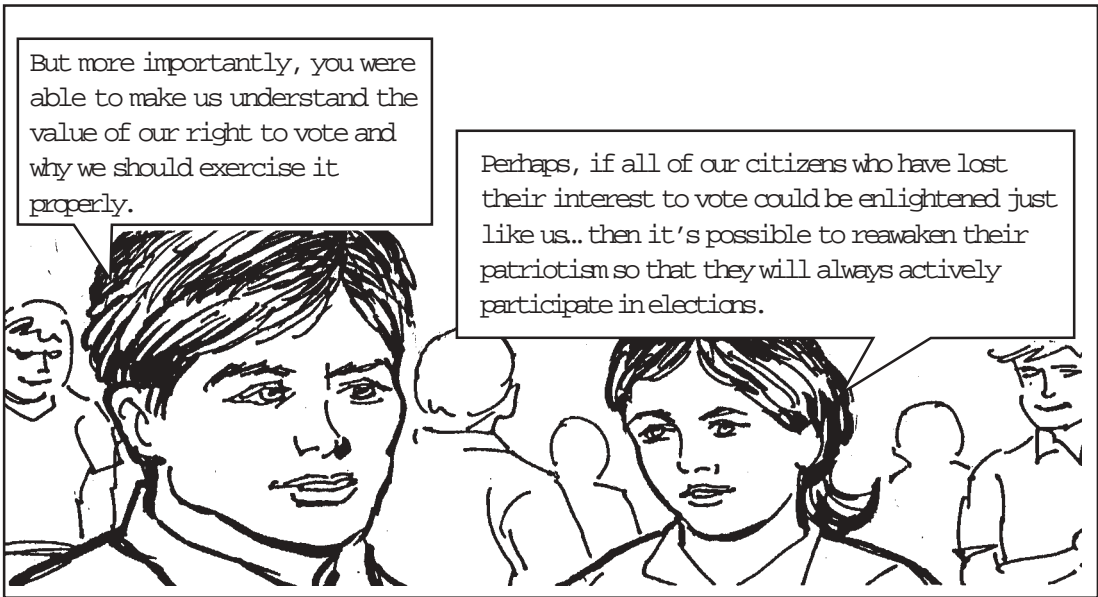
What you are saying is right. It is stated so in our constitution. Sad to say. But it is often violated every election.



Yeah, that is so.







Look at Linda, she's become a fan of Atty. Santos!



What do you know, Atty. Santos might be the president of our country one day! Then his autograph would be very valuable.





Let's See What You Have Learned

Have you finished listening to the tape or reading the dialogue? If so, answer the following questions based on the proceedings of the meeting that you have just listened to or read.

1. What important points or issues about the right to vote were raised during the meeting?

2. How important is the people's participation in attaining free, peaceful and clean elections?

3. What was the reaction of the people at the meeting to the explanations of Atty. Santos? Why did they react that way?

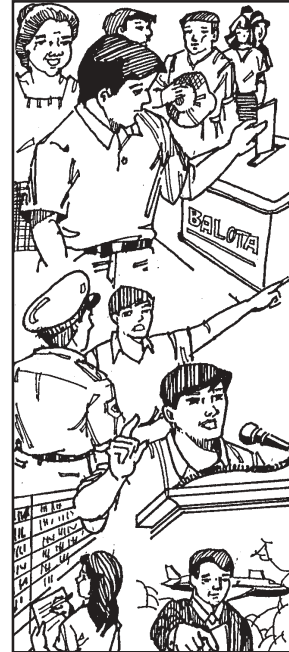
Compare your answers with those found in the *Answer Key* on page 27.



Let's Remember

Based on our Constitution, a Filipino citizen of voting age has the following rights during elections.

- ◆ The right to vote for the person or persons who he/she thinks deserves his/her vote
- ◆ The right to inform authorities of the law of any irregularities and violence observed during elections
- ◆ The right to expression or freedom of speech, provided that he/she does not malign other people
- ◆ The right to be informed of the winners in the election
- ◆ The right of every natural-born Filipino to vote even if he/she is working in another country, as long as he/she does not intend to stay there permanently



This is the end of the module. Congratulations for finishing it. To better remember its important points, read the module summary that follows.



Let's Sum Up

- ◆ The Philippines is a democratic country, which means its leaders are selected by a majority of the people through elections.
- ◆ In the Philippines, there are national and local elections.
 - National elections are elections for president, vice-president, senators and congressmen.
 - Presidential elections are held every six years. Elections for senators and congressmen are held every three years.
 - Local government officials are elected during local elections. Local elections are held every three years.

- ◆ A Filipino citizen who is 18 years old and above has a right and responsibility to vote.
- ◆ Freedom of expression and the freedom to choose whom to vote are rights of all Filipino citizens.
- ◆ All Filipino citizens, including those who are working in other countries, have a responsibility to exercise their right to vote.
- ◆ It is important that all voters safeguard their votes to ensure a clean, peaceful and free election.



What Have You Learned?

- A. Fill in the blanks with the correct answers. Choose from the words inside the box.

republican	election	democratic
21	10	6
majority	right	privilege
accept	protest	public officials
votation	18	3

1. An _____ is the democratic process in which the people choose their leaders.
2. In a _____ country like the Philipines, people have the right to vote. They must exercise this power during elections.
3. A person must be _____ years old or above to be able to vote.
4. Presidential elections are held every _____ years.
5. Senatorial and congressional elections are held every _____ years.
6. The _____ rules in a democratic society.
7. It is the _____ of adults to vote.
8. We must _____ any election irregularity.

- B. Read the following story and write an appropriate ending by telling what the people should do. Also, identify the election irregularities mentioned and explain why they occurred.

Desperate to Win

Mrs. Sarah Rodriguez was the principal of an elementary school. She was a highly respected person. Teachers, students and parents often came to her to seek advice and assistance. She was very influential to the people around her. Because of her good performance and reputation, the people requested her to run for mayor.

Mayor Santos, who had a bad reputation as a gambler, womanizer, and who had illegal businesses, was planning to run for reelection. Having been mayor for two consecutive terms, he had a lot of connections. However, his candidacy was threatened by Mrs. Rodriguez's popularity.

Mayor Santos, with the help of his advisers, drafted a plan to eliminate Mrs. Rodriguez from the race.

First, they offered money to Mrs. Rodriguez for her to back out. Mrs. Rodriguez did not accept the money.

Next, they offered Mrs. Rodriguez a larger amount and persuaded her to join their team as the vice-mayor. Again, she rejected their offer.

Mayor Santos, whose patience was running out, tried to scare Mrs. Rodriguez into backing out through threats. Every night, some of Mayor Santos's men were seen roaming around the houses of Mrs. Rodriguez and her supporters. There was even an instance when gunshots were heard near Mrs. Rodriguez's residence. But still, Mrs. Rodriguez did not withdraw her candidacy.

Because of the firm decision of Mrs. Rodriguez to continue her candidacy, Mayor Santos got desperate. He had his men tear down Mrs. Rodriguez's campaign posters. He started offering money to the people in exchange for their votes. He even contracted flying voters.

When the election day came, armed men took some ballot boxes from different precincts.

1. How do you think should the story end?
What should the people do about the situation? (2 points)

2. What were the election irregularities committed by Mayor Santos and his men? (5 points)

Have you finished answering the questions? If so, compare your answers with those found in the *Answer Key* on page 28. If your score is:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 0 – 8 | You need to review the entire module again. |
| 9 – 12 | Good! Just review the parts of the module that you didn't understand. |
| 13 – 15 | Very good. This indicates that you have learned much from the module. You can now proceed to the next one. |



Answer Key

A. Let's See What You Already Know (page 2)

1. 4
2. 4
3. 8 – Only residents or registered voters in a barangay can vote in the barangay elections.
4. 8 – It is illegal to steal ballot boxes, especially for the purpose of tampering with or replacing the ballots.
5. 4
6. 4
7. 4
8. 4
9. 4
10. 4

B. Lesson 1

Let's See What You Have Learned (page 9)

We live in a democratic country. Thus, we have the right to participate in political activities such as elections to select leaders of our own choosing. When we select our leaders, we are entrusting our future in their hands. Therefore, it is very important that we choose the right persons to ensure our security, peace, stability and progress as a nation. Elected officials are empowered to represent the interests of the people of their electorate. Their political power arises from the fact that they were democratically elected by the people. If they abuse this power, they can be replaced by the people at the next elections by being voted out of office. This is what is meant by the constitutional provision that “sovereignty resides with the people and all government authority emanates from them.”

C. Lesson 2

Let's Review (page 12)

1. The voters did the right thing. They safeguarded their votes by ensuring that the illegal miscounting of votes was investigated. Their request for the COMELEC to conduct the investigation is the proper way to safeguard their right to fair election. If I were the witness, I would also do what is right. This is my responsibility as a concerned citizen of my country.
2. The government showed its sincerity by giving in to the request of the townspeople for an investigation. It was proven that the real winner was the doctor. This was confirmed by the Supreme Court.
3. Nobody is above the law. The law is just and helps to protect our right to fair and democratic elections.

Let's See What You Have Learned (page 21)

1. Important points:
 - ◆ Only those who are 18 years old and above can vote.
 - ◆ Filipinos who are working overseas still have the right to vote here if they do not intend to stay permanently in their place of work and if they did not denounce their Filipino citizenship.
 - ◆ We have the right to express our opinions freely. This is guaranteed by our Constitution. It is also our right to choose the candidate who we think deserves our votes.
 - ◆ A lot of people in position and/or are aspiring for a position will do everything to win and to stay in power. A lot of them resort to illegal means such as vote buying and multiple registrations, employing what we call "flying voters."
2. If the people will exercise their right to vote properly, and they will be united in safeguarding their votes, there will be no vote buying and selling and no "flying voters" anymore.
3. The people were saddened by the harsh realities happening during elections like vote buying, the occurrences of "flying voters," people receiving threats from armed men, etc. They initially felt helpless and cheated of their rights. From the active discussion of the group, however, they realized there is a need to unite themselves to fight these illegal activities.

D. What Have You Learned? (pages 23-25)

- A. 1. election 5. 3
2. democratic 6. majority
3. 18 7. right
4. 6 8. protest

B 1. Suggested Ending:

As a result of his manipulations of the election process, Mayor Santos narrowly received the most votes and claimed victory. The people, because they were aware of their rights during elections, filed a complaint against Mayor Santos to the COMELEC regarding the irregularities that he had committed. The people reported the instances when the mayor violated the rules of elections. The COMELEC investigated the complaint and found the mayor guilty of electoral fraud.

In the end, Mayor Santos was sent to jail and Mrs. Rodriguez was announced as the new mayor. In this battle, it was not only Mrs. Rodriguez who emerged the winner but also everyone who fought for what they thought was right.

2. Irregularities:

- a. Mayor Santos engaged in bribery. He bribed Mrs. Rodriguez to quit and join his team; he also bribed the people to vote for him.
- b. Mayor Santos also hired flying voters to vote in different precincts.
- c. Mayor Santos hired armed men to threaten Mrs. Rodriguez.
- d. Mayor Santos violated the people's right to freedom of expression when his men threatened Mrs. Rodriguez and her supporters and tore down her campaign posters.
- e. Mayor Santos's men stole ballot boxes from different precincts.



Glossary

Ballot A sheet of paper used to cast a secret vote

Canvassing Counting (of votes)

Democracy A government by the people; a government where there is rule of the majority

Election Process of selecting the leaders of a group, organization or territory

Electorate A body of people entitled to vote

Fraud Intentional deception, trickery or misrepresentation

Incumbent The current holder of an office

Malign To speak injurious and wrong statements about someone or something

Precinct A subdivision of a town, municipality or city for election purposes

Sovereignty Supreme power



References

Nolledo, Jose N. *The 1991 Local Government Code with Basic Features*. Caloocan City: Philippine Graphic Arts, Inc., 1996.

Internet Sources:

1997 Philippine Constitution. Article II: Declaration of Principles and State Policies. <http://members.tripod.com/~malolos/1987/article_02.html>. November 20, 2000, date accessed.

1987 Philippine Constitution. Article III: Bill of Rights. <http://members.tripod.com/~malolos/1987/article_03.html>. November 20, 2000, date accessed.

Guia, Luie Tito F. *Philippine Political System*. <www.codewan.com.ph/peoplespower/rp_elections/rp_political.html>. November 20, 2000, date accessed.