

# Pivotal Role of Accountants in Elections

By Chairman Joel L. Tan-Torres

Accountants have been playing a pivotal role in elections in the Philippines for ages. For the past elections, including the current one, accountants have been in the forefront of election related activities. Prominent Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) such as Jose Diokno, Wenceslao Lagumbay, Alberto Romulo, and Manuel Villar were elected several times as Senators or Congressmen. There have also been several other accountants who have been elected to executive government positions such as governors, mayors and councilors. For this May elections, I am aware of several CPAs who are involved in party list organizations or political parties. These include Win Ballada, first nominee for the ASEAN 2016 Party List and Ben Punongbayan, Chairman of the COMELEC registered political party called Buklod.

Accountants are also actively informed in the various citizen arms or organizations assisting the COMELEC in the this year's elections. This includes Dave Balangue, who is Chairperson of National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). The NAMFREL is the organization accredited by COMELEC to assist in election related matters including the conduct of a quick count of the election results. Accountants will also be involved in various capacities to monitor and maintain vigilance over the conduct of elections and the counting of the votes for the next few days in May/.

The various political parties and candidates running for elective positions have CPAs assisting them in the many activities related to the COMELEC registration campaign, elections, counting of votes and the post elections reporting requirements. The campaign and election process will incur the receipt and disbursement of millions, if not billions, of pesos. It is important that all political candidates have an accurate accounting of these financial transactions. COMELEC will require detailed reporting of the contributions and donations received, the amount of campaign expenses and may other financial information from every political the candidate and party. Accountants hired by them will be very busy tabulating the numbers and preparing these reports. The need for accurate financial reports becomes more evident with the recent initiative of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to scrutinize the records of the major political candidates to ascertain the tax implications that may arise. BIR rules provide that any excess and unspent amounts of political contributions will be taxable on the part of candidate and political party. Likewise, the political parties and candidates should make sure that they have withheld the appropriate amount of taxes required by the BIR on payments for their campaign expenditures.

It is also interesting to note that a Vice Presidential candidate is using forensic accountants in following the audit trail of the flow of money in the alleged billions of peso deposit accounts of a rival Presidential candidate.

The role of accountants does not end with the conclusion of the elections and the declaration of the winning candidates. Accountants will be called forth to assume the many positions that will be available for filling up by the incoming administration. When the newly elected President assumes his or her office on July 1, 2016, he or she will be focused on putting in place the most qualified person to the many government positions that will be vacant or will be vacated by the present incumbents. A large number of these will be positions that will require accounting or financial competencies or skills. Accountants should and definitely would be considered for these positions.

The new Congress that will convene on July 1, 2016 will also be pushing for various legislation. This will be the best time to push for the revisions in the Accountancy Law that are being subject to dialogue and consultations by the Board of Accountancy. Hence, by that time, a package of recommendations for the revision of the Accountancy Law will be available for sponsorship by the incoming congressmen and senators,

Finally, on May 9 when we go to the polls, all of us accountants will be one with all Filipinos in using our sound judgment when selecting our new set of leaders who we will rely on to give us a better Philippines.

This column accepts contributions from accountants, especially articles that are of interest to the accountancy profession, in particular, and to the business community, in general. These can be e-mailed to [boa.secretariat@gmail.com](mailto:boa.secretariat@gmail.com) Chairman



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