



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Intramuros, Manila

IN THE MATTER OF THE GENERAL
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CONDUCT
OF RANDOM MANUAL AUDIT
(RMA) FOR THE 12 MAY 2025
NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS
AND BANGSAMORO
AUTONOMOUS REGION IN
MUSLIM MINDANAO
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND
SUBSEQUENT ELECTIONS
THEREAFTER.

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x-----x Promulgated: December 12, 2024

RESOLUTION NO. 11089

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) is mandated under Section 29 of Republic Act No. 8436, as amended by Section 24 of Republic Act No. 9369, to conduct random manual audit;

WHEREAS, COMELEC promulgated Resolution No. 10078, dated 11 March 2016, entitled "In the Matter of the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 09 May 2016 Automated National and Local Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter," Resolution No. 10090, dated 13 April 2016, entitled "In the Matter of Amendments to the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) from the 9 May 2016 Automated National and Local Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter," Resolution No. 10109, dated 03 May 2016, entitled "In the Matter of Further Amending the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 09 May 2016 Automated National and Local Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter," Resolution No. 10458, dated 05 December 2018, entitled "In the Matter of the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 13 May 2019 Automated Synchronized National and Local Elections Thereafter," Resolution No. 10525, dated 11 April 2019, entitled "In the Matter of Further Amending the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 13 May 2019 Automated Synchronized National and Local Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter," and Resolution No. 10738, dated 09 December 2021, entitled "In the Matter of General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 09 May 2022 Automated Synchronized National and Local

Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter” and Resolution No. 10774, dated 23 March 2022, entitled “In the Matter of the Amendment of the General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 9 May 2022 Automated Synchronized National and Local Elections and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Parliamentary Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act No. 8436, as amended by Republic Act No. 9369, the COMELEC has adopted a paper-based Automated Election System (AES) using the Automated Counting Machines (ACMs) for the May 12, 2025 National and Local Elections, and BARMM Parliamentary Elections;

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution and other existing laws, COMELEC **RESOLVED**, as it hereby **RESOLVES** to promulgate the following *General Instructions for the Conduct of Random Manual Audit (RMA) for the 12 May 2025 National and Local Elections and Subsequent Elections Thereafter*:

SECTION 1. Principles and Objectives of the Random Manual Audit (RMA). As mandated by law, there shall be a manual audit of the precinct vote count results generated by the ACM used for the election in the randomly selected precincts from each of the legislative districts in the country.

The required number of random sampling of precincts to be audited implies that the coverage of the RMA is national. RMA results, whether of national or local positions, are aggregated on a national level. Audit conclusions are therefore made on a national level. Conversely, no audit conclusion can be made in relation to individualized local contests.

Manual audit refers to the visual reading and counting of votes on a paper ballot or its equivalent, without the use of a machine and a comparison of said results to results generated by the machine count.

In an automated election that employs the Optical Mark Reader (OMR) technology, the official precinct vote count is generated using the OMR Counting Machine prescribed by COMELEC for the election. The standard that should guide the manual or visual interpretation of vote marks or shades on the paper ballot during the audit must therefore be how the OMR Counting Machine was configured to interpret said vote marks or shades.

The RMA shall be safe, efficient, transparent, participative, and credible.

SECTION 2. Definition of Terms:

- a. **Ambiguous Shades** – refers to an incident when an oval of a ballot is partially shaded, and the shade covers approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the oval.
- b. **Automated Counting Machine (ACM)** – refers to the device that employs the Optical Mark Reader Technology (OMR) used in counting the votes on a ballot or its equivalent.

- c. **Misplaced Shades** – refers to an incident when a voter places marking/s other than on the oval of a ballot.
- d. **Over-vote** – refers to an incident when the voter selects more than the number of seats allowed for one position i.e., 13 shades were made instead of the number (12) of seats allowed.
- e. **RMA Committee (RMAC)** – shall be composed of the representatives from the Civil Society or Professional Organizations (CSPO), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), and COMELEC, which are tasked to ensure a safe, efficient, transparent, participative, and credible RMA.
- f. **RMA Reception Custody Group for RMA-RDT (RCG for RMA-RDT)** – shall physically receive and secure the ballot boxes subject to manual audit from the RMA-RDT.
- g. **RMA Retrieval Delivery Team (RMA-RDT)** – shall be composed of the Regional Election Director, Provincial Election Supervisor, Election Officer, and City/Municipal Treasurer jointly responsible for ensuring a.) the safe, secure, and transparent conduct of the following acts relevant to the handling of the ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts for audit; and b) retrieval and delivery to the RMA Center of ballot boxes.
- h. **RMA Supervisors** – shall act as representatives of the RMAC in the conduct, supervision, and control of the RMA, particularly in the security of the ballot boxes, maintenance of peace and order within the Audit Areas of the RMA Center. The RMA Supervisors shall oversee the entire RMA process and may provide guidance if any deviations or variances occur, decide on the necessary actions, ensure compliance with the procedures, and perform such other functions as may be legally required by the RMAC.
- i. **RMA Support Staff** - Personnel who shall assist in the logistical and administrative requirements of RMAC and RMATs, and other matters related thereto.
- j. **RMA Team (RMAT)** – shall be composed of 3 members (Chairperson, Secretary, and Third Member) under the direct supervision of the RMAC. The RMAT is directly tasked to read, count, and tally the votes indicated on the ballot.
- k. **RMA Verifiers**– shall be responsible for verifying election materials, such as the Election Returns (ER), and shall ensure the integrity of the materials by supervising the opening and counting process.
- l. **Source Code Review (SCR)** – is the process of examining the human-readable instructions of the automated random selection program recommended and developed by the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA).
- m. **Under-vote** – refers to an incident when the voter selects less than the maximum number of seats allowed for a position i.e., 6 shades were made instead of the 12 number of seats allowed.
- n. **Variance** - refers to the value or difference between the figures in the Election Returns (ER) and figures in the manual count.
- o. **Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** – refers to the receipt generated by the ACM to reflect the votes cast by a voter.

SECTION 3. *The RMA Technical Working Group (RMA-TWG).* There shall be an

RMA-TWG approved by COMELEC *En Banc*, composed of the following:

1. TWG Head;
2. Assistant Heads:
 - a. Operations Committee
 - b. Resource Allocation Committee
 - c. Stakeholders Engagement Committee
3. Members

The RMA-TWG shall be entitled to remuneration of One Thousand Pesos (PhP 1,000.00) daily, from the start of the actual audit activities until the completion of audit proper.

SECTION 4. *The RMA Committee (RMAC).* There shall be an RMAC that shall ensure that the RMA proceeds in a safe, efficient, transparent, participative, and credible manner.

The RMAC shall be composed of representatives of the:

- a) CSPO recognized by COMELEC;
- b) PSA and
- c) COMELEC.

The RMAC shall decide by a majority vote.

The COMELEC shall be the Chairperson of the RMAC.

The COMELEC representative shall be a Director IV, whose principal functions are to manage the logistical and administrative requirements of the RMA and to ensure that the objectives are achieved in a safe, efficient, transparent, participative, and credible process. He or she shall ensure that the integrity of the election documents used in the RMA process is preserved within the RMA Center.

A Commissioner of COMELEC shall be assigned to oversee the preparation and conduct of the RMA.

The representative of the CSPO, as determined by its members, shall be one of the members of RMAC.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), as the primary statistical agency in the Philippines, is responsible for determining the sampling method used in the Random Manual Audit. The PSA also assists in processing the audit results to ensure accurate and systematic data handling and aids in generating reports on the accuracy of the Automated Counting Machines (ACM).

In emergency and exceptional circumstances, the RMAC shall recommend to the *En Banc* amendments to the provisions of this Resolution for the purpose of ensuring a safe, efficient, transparent, participative, and credible conduct of the RMA.

SECTION 5. *Number of Precincts or Online Voting Post to be Randomly Selected for the RMA.*

A. For Votes cast using the Automated Counting Machine

The actual number of precincts to be selected in a legislative district shall be determined by proportional allocation, that is, based on the number of clustered precincts a legislative district has in proportion to that of all the other legislative districts in the country.

The COMELEC, upon the recommendation of the RMAC, shall decide on the maximum total number of clustered precincts to be selected based on statistical sampling principles and taking into consideration resources available.

For purposes of the 12 May 2025 National and Local Elections, the maximum total number of clustered precincts to be selected shall not be more than seven hundred sixty-two (762).

Once the maximum total number of clustered precincts to be selected is determined, COMELEC shall approve the proportional allocation of the actual number of clustered precincts to be selected in each legislative district based on the recommendation of the PSA. The approval on the proportional allocation shall be made not later than ninety (90) days before the election.

B. For votes cast through the Online Voting and Counting System

Only one (1) Online Voting Post shall be randomly selected from the list of Online Voting Posts cited under COMELEC Resolution No. 11061, Section 8 thereof.

SECTION 6. *Random Selection of Clustered Precincts or Online Voting Post for the RMA.* The random selection of the clustered precincts for the RMA shall be conducted publicly on the day of the elections in the following manner:

a) At ten o'clock in the morning (10:00 A.M.), the RMAC shall randomly select the specific clustered precincts per legislative district or online voting post for the RMA;

b) At twelve o'clock noon (12:00 P.M.), the List of Randomly Selected Clustered Precincts per legislative district or online voting post, and the Contingency List of Randomly Selected Clustered Precincts per legislative district or online voting post shall be released to the public;

The random selection shall be done using an automated random selection program recommended or developed by the PSA.

The RMAC shall promptly provide RMA-RDTs with the Lists of Specific Municipalities/Cities, Randomly Selected Clustered Precincts, and the Contingency List of Randomly Selected Clustered Precinct.

SECTION 7. *Source Code Review.* The source code of the automated random

selection program may be reviewed by representatives of Registered Political Parties and Accredited Citizens' Arm Groups.

Registered Political Parties and Accredited Citizens' Arm Groups interested in conducting a Source Code Review shall signify their intent in writing, submit the methodologies which they intend to use and the name/s of their representative/s, maximum of two (2), who will review the Source Code, not later than the last week of April for approval of the RMAC. Registered Political Parties and Accredited Citizens' Arm Groups shall execute a Non-Disclosure Agreement before conducting the Source Code Review.

RMAC, through COMELEC, shall provide a safe, secure, and enclosed facility/location for the conduct of the SCR and shall properly record all entries to and exits from the said facility/ location. Said facility/location shall be identified by the RMA-TWG.

COMELEC shall provide a read-only copy of the source codes, which shall be viewed in a workstation inside the secured facility/location.

Registered Political Parties and Accredited Citizens' Arm Group shall not take out any copy of the source code or any part thereof from the secure facility/location.

SCR must be initiated by the last week of March of the Election Year but must be finished within ten (10) days thereafter.

Each Registered Political Party or Accredited Citizens' Arm Group that conducted a Source Code Review shall submit a Report to RMAC within ten (10) days from completion of the review period.

SECTION 8. *Date and Venue of the RMA.* The RMA proper shall start not later than five (5) days after Election Day and shall be held at a venue within the National Capital Region to be determined by the RMAC.

The venue selected is denominated as the RMA Center, which shall be accessible and shall allow public observation of the RMA, subject to the need of an efficient and orderly process, security of election documents, and overall safety of the participants.

The RMA shall start the RMA at the RMA Center on the day determined by the RMAC. The audit shall start at eight o'clock in the morning (8:00 A.M.) and end at six o'clock in the afternoon (6 P.M.) and shall continue from day to day until the audit is completed. A system for the continuation of the audit of the assigned ballot box per RMA the next day shall be strictly implemented by the RMAC to ensure the integrity of the process.

The members of the RMA, RMA Supervisors, and RMA Verifiers shall be liable and may be blacklisted from subsequent RMA activities if they fail to conduct the RMA in accordance with the provisions of this Resolution, without prejudice to any administrative, criminal, or civil liability incurred. COMELEC, through the RMAC, shall likewise have the authority to withhold the honoraria and transportation allowance of

the members of the RMA, RMA Supervisors, and RMA Verifiers, and to suspend or to immediately terminate their respective engagements should they fail to conduct RMA in accordance with the provisions of this Resolution.

The representatives of Registered Political Parties, Citizens' Arm Groups, Media, and the Public shall be permitted to observe the conduct of the RMA, subject to space considerations. A Live Viewing Room shall also be set up to facilitate the virtual public observation of the conduct of the RMA.

The RMAC may suspend the RMA, but only upon exceptional circumstances, such as, but not limited to:

- a) power interruption within the RMA Center;
- b) fire and any other calamity in the RMA Center or within the immediate area;
- c) disturbance of peace and order in the RMA Center or within the immediate area; and
- d) other circumstances analogous to the foregoing.

Upon cessation of the cause of suspension, the RMAC shall immediately direct the RMA, RMA Verifiers and RMA Supervisors to continue the RMA.

The RMAC shall inform the public of their decision to suspend and continue the RMA.

The RMA Center shall be provided with security personnel until the RMA is finished and shall ensure the safety and security of the RMA and its proceedings.

SECTION 9. *The Random Manual Audit Team (RMA), its Composition and Appointment.*

a) The COMELEC, through the RMAC, shall determine the total number and the selection process of RMATs. The RMAC shall determine the number of RMATs to be convened for the conduct of audit daily at the RMA Center, taking into consideration its space, area to be observed during the conduct of the RMA.

b) The RMAT shall be under the direct control and supervision of the RMAC.

c) The RMAT shall be composed of three (3) members:

c.1. Chairperson;

c.2. Secretary; and

c.3. Third Member.

d) RMA members shall be public school teachers, giving preference to those who have served as members of the Electoral Board or RMA in past elections. If the number of public school teachers is not sufficient, the RMA shall appoint RMA members from the following:

d.1. Private school teachers;

d.2. National government employees;

d.3. DepEd non-teaching personnel or

d.4. Other national government officials and employees holding regular or permanent positions, excluding uniformed personnel of the Department of National Defense and all its attached agencies;

d.5. Members of the non-partisan COMELEC Accredited Citizens' Arm Groups.

d.6. Any registered voter of the city or municipality where the RMA Center is located, is of known integrity and competence who is not connected with any candidate or political party.

e) The COMELEC representative to the RMA, in coordination with the Office of the Regional Election Director of National Capital Region and the Department of Education (DepEd), shall submit a list of RMA members in a number determined by the RMA, including substitute members referred to in the next paragraph, not later than the date set for the constitution of Electoral Board members.

f) In case of absence or illness of an RMA member, the RMA shall appoint any of the following listed below in the order of priority to fill said vacancy temporarily until the absent member appears, provided that the substitute member shall possess the same qualifications as that of an RMA member:

f.1. Members of the non-partisan COMELEC Accredited Citizens' Arm Groups

f.2. Private school teachers;

f.3. National government employees;

f.4. DepEd non-teaching personnel;

f.5. Other national government officials and employees holding regular or permanent positions, excluding uniformed personnel of the Department of National Defense and all its attached agencies;

f.6. Any registered voter of the city or municipality where the RMA Center is located of known integrity and competence who is not connected with

any candidate or political party.

In case no substitution is made for the absent RMA member as provided for in the preceding section, the present RMA members shall proceed with the conduct of the RMA and shall decide matters only upon a unanimous vote.

g) All RMA members shall accomplish their Appointment Papers and take their Oath not later than the start of the RMA.

SECTION 10. *Qualifications of the RMA.* Members of the RMA, whether regular or substitute, must:

a) be of good moral character, non-partisan and of irreproachable reputation;

b) be a registered voter;

c) not a member or not related up to the fourth (4th) degree of consanguinity and affinity to any member of the Electoral Board who conducted the polls in the same clustered precinct, or to the other members of the RMA of which they are a part of;

d) not related up to the fourth (4th) degree of consanguinity and affinity to any candidate in the same clustered precinct;

e) have never been convicted of any election offense or of any other crime punishable by more than six (6) months imprisonment;

f) have no pending case against them filed before the Commission on Elections or Trial Court for any election offense;

g) have undergone the required training for RMA members; and

h) without any health-related concerns that may hamper the performance of their duty.

All RMA members shall fully consent to participate in and warrant the accuracy of disclosed information for the monitoring and reporting protocol, including the sharing of confidential health status data to the authorized personnel on a need-to-know basis.

The listed RMAs shall be subject to Competency Qualifications, as determined by the RMAC, including but not limited to:

a) Technology literacy, particularly for automated elections;

b) Passing of examinations conducted during the training;

c) Previous performance and records, including offense records.

The determination of the presence of the competency qualifications shall be included in the training program of the RMAC for both the regular and substitute RMAs.

SECTION 11. *Honoraria of the RMA Members.* The honorarium for each RMA member shall be equal to the honorarium of an Electoral Board member, which shall cover their remuneration for services rendered in performing the RMA, in addition to

their transportation allowance. RMA Members shall only be eligible for transportation allowance if they are able to audit at least one (1) ballot box.

RMA members who shall audit BARMM Parliamentary Elections (BPE) ballots are entitled to an additional honorarium.

The members of the RMA shall be entitled to service incentive leave and other applicable benefits as that granted to members of the Electoral Board.

SECTION 12. RMA Verifiers. There shall be RMA Verifiers, who shall primarily review, verify the findings of RMA Ts and perform other tasks as may be assigned by the RMA C. The RMA Verifiers shall be composed of representatives from the Civil Society or Professional Organizations, preferably Certified Public Accountants (CPA). They are entitled to remuneration of Two Thousand Pesos (PhP 2,000.00) per ballot box verified.

SECTION 13. RMA Supervisors. The RMA C shall constitute the RMA Supervisors who shall:

- a) act as representatives of the RMA C in the supervision of activities and in the conduct of audit;
- b) be responsible for the security of the ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts within the Audit Areas;
- c) during the conduct of the RMA, maintain peace and order within the Audit Areas and its premises, keep access thereto open and unobstructed to authorized participants, and enforce obedience to its lawful orders. If any person refuses to obey the lawful orders of the RMA Supervisors or conducts themselves in a disorderly manner in their presence or during the audit proceedings, or interrupts or disturbs the same, the RMA Supervisors may issue an Order in writing directing any peace officer to take such person into custody until adjournment of the RMA. Decisions or actions of the RMA Supervisors may be challenged and shall be elevated to the RMA C using the template provided in Annex "A"; and
- d) perform such other functions prescribed by the RMA C, or under the Omnibus Election Code or by any other rules and regulations promulgated by COMELEC.

The RMA Supervisors shall be entitled to remuneration of Two Thousand Pesos (PhP 2,000.00) per ballot box audited.

SECTION 14. RMA Support Staff. Personnel who shall assist in the logistical and administrative requirements of the RMA C and RMA Ts, and other matters related thereto.

There shall be fifteen (15) Support Staff allocated to the following committees:

- 1. Two (2) for Operations;
- 2. Six (6) for RCG of RMA Center;

3. Two (2) for Resources;
4. Three (3) External Stakeholders; and
5. Two (2) Others.

The RMA Support Staff shall be entitled to remuneration of Ten Thousand Pesos (PhP 10,000.00) per month or based on actual service rendered effective upon the start of actual audit activities until the completion of audit proper.

SECTION 15. *The RMA Proper.* On the day determined by the RMAC, the RMA members shall be at the Audit Areas not later than 7:00 a.m. The RMA shall await the clustered precinct which shall be assigned by the RMA Supervisors for audit.

While awaiting the assignment of the specific clustered precinct, the RMA members shall take out all forms in their RMA Kit.

- a) The Chairperson shall take in their possession the three (3) copies of the Minutes of the RMA.
- b) The Secretary shall hold the six (6) copies of the Audit Returns.
- c) The Third Member shall post the Tally Board in its proper place.

Upon receipt of the assigned clustered precinct, the RMA shall commence the conduct of the audit following the procedure referred to in the next provision.

SECTION 16. *Prohibited Acts.*

A. The following are not allowed within the premises of the Audit Area:

- a) Electronic devices, including but not limited to laptops, mobile phones, cameras, USB drives, and other storage devices inside the Audit area/location, except for those who are authorized by the RMAC; and
- b) The bringing of food inside the audit area.

B. Members of the RMA are explicitly prohibited from searching or consulting any information regarding the results of any ballot box being audited during the RMA.

SECTION 17. *Opening Procedure for the RMA.* In case COMELEC decides to use Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting Machines instead of the paper-based Optimal Mark Recognition (OMR) Counting Machines, the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) receipts are taken to be the material equivalent of ballots for purposes of this Resolution.

At the start of the RMA, the Chairperson shall:

- a) Proceed with the RMA by presenting the ballot box to all those who are present.
- b) Verify the condition of the following items to check if the integrity is

maintained:

b.1. Ballot box; and

b.2. Security seals attached to the ballot box.

c) Break the security seals and open the ballot box.

d) Retrieve the sealed envelopes containing the Minutes of Testing and Sealing, the Minutes of Voting and Counting, the copy of the Election Returns, and the receptacle for VVPAT receipts from the ballot box.

The copy of the Election Returns shall be handed over to the assigned RMA Verifiers and shall not be accessed by the RMA until closing procedure of the assigned ballot box, to ensure the integrity of the process. The RMA Verifiers shall only disclose to the RMA the number of valid ballots counted as indicated in the copy of the Electronic Returns.

e) Break the security seals and open the envelopes containing the Minutes of Testing and Sealing, the Minutes of Voting and Counting and the copy of the Election Returns.

The Secretary shall:

f) Verify if serial numbers of the security seals attached to ballot box are the same as that indicated in the Minutes of Voting and Counting. The results of such verification or any variance whatsoever shall be recorded in the provided checklist.

g) Inventory the contents of the ballot box using the provided checklist ensuring that every event is recorded therein; provided that, if there is any article that the Electoral Board should have placed inside the ballot box and that is found missing, the RMA shall note such fact in the provided checklist.

In the event the copy of the Election Returns for the ballot box is missing therein, the RMA shall inform the RMA Supervisors. The RMA Supervisors will then request for an authentic copy of the Election Returns or scanned Certified True Copy from the Citizens' Arm Group accredited to conduct the parallel count.

h) Retrieve the valid ballots from the ballot box, perform a physical count and compare if the number of valid ballots found inside the ballot box is equal to the number of valid ballots counted as indicated in the Election Returns.

After the physical count by the Secretary and the total number of valid ballots does not match the number of valid ballots counted, the Third Member shall determine whether valid ballots were mixed with rejected ballots by referring to the Minutes of Testing and Sealing and Minutes of Voting and Counting of the Electoral Board. If the valid ballots were not mixed with rejected ballots, the Third Member shall inform the RMA Supervisors.

The RMA Supervisors shall record the variance between the physical count of

ballots and the number of valid ballots counted as indicated in the Election Returns. The RMA shall still proceed to process the said ballot box.

The RMA Verifiers shall strictly supervise the reading, counting and tabulating process by the RMA. Any irregularity as to the said processes shall be reported to the assigned RMA Supervisors. Repeated deviations by the RMA from the mandated reading, counting and tabulating protocols, and all other RMA procedure shall be a ground for the immediate termination of their engagement.

During the counting, the RMA shall position themselves in such a way as to give the watchers and the public an unimpeded view of the ballot or VVPAT receipt, as the case may be, being read by the Chairperson, as well as of the Audit Returns and Tally Board being simultaneously accomplished by the Secretary and Third Member, respectively, including the utilization of the Live Viewing Room.

The table to be used by the RMA shall be cleared of all unnecessary things.

SECTION 18. *In-Person Observation of the RMA.* Watchers, lawyers, representatives of candidates, party lists, parliamentary political parties and/or political parties may personally observe the conduct of the audit and are expected to strictly adhere to the established rules. Observers shall remain within the designated areas and must refrain from taking photographs or from touching any RMA documents/paraphernalia. Neither shall the observers be involved in nor disrupt the proceedings of the RMA. Any violation hereof shall constitute as an election offense and shall be penalized in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 881.

Observers shall signify their intent to observe in the RMA by submitting a Letter Request to the RMA-TWG. The request shall state the following:

- i. The name of the observer/s;
- ii. If the observer is a representative, state the name of the candidate, party list, parliamentary political parties and/or political parties, or agency/association/corporation/organization that they are representing; and
- iii. The date and time they wish to observe in the audit proceedings.

A written authority or Special Power of Attorney shall be attached in the letter request of the representative, signed by the candidate or President, Chairperson or Secretary General of the party list, parliamentary political parties, and/or political parties. In the case of agency/association/corporation/organization, the written authority must be signed by the head of agency/association/organization or corporate secretary for corporations.

The letter request shall be sent to the RMA-TWG either through personal service or through electronic mail whose office address and email address shall be determined by the RMA-TWG, not later than three (3) days before the intended date for the in-person observation.

SECTION 19. *Guidelines on Readings of Votes.* The Chairperson, prior to reading the votes cast, shall:

a) Check the number of votes for each position subject to RMA.

a.1. In case there is an over-vote, such fact shall be recorded in the Audit Returns by the Secretary, and the Tally Board by the Third Member but the vote shall not be counted for any candidate for that position. An over-vote shall not invalidate the entire ballot or VVPAT receipt. The votes for other positions (that are not over-voted) shall be counted.

a.2. In case there is an under-vote, such fact shall be recorded in the Audit Returns by the Secretary and the Tally Board by the Third Member. The fact of under-voting in any position will not invalidate the votes for that position.

For a multi-slot position, the fact of under-voting shall be recorded based on the actual number of under-votes i.e., eleven (11) if the ballot shows that the voter only voted for one (1) candidate when there are allowed maximum number of twelve (12) seats for such position.

The Chairperson shall set aside ballots with over-votes and those with under-votes in the respective envelopes so denominated. If a ballot has an over-vote and an under-vote, the ballot should be placed in the Envelope for Ballots with Under-votes.

b) If an oval of a ballot is partially shaded and the shade covers approximately fifteen percent (15%) of the oval, the subject ballot shall then be placed in an RMA envelope for Ballots with Ambiguous Shades. The appreciation of vote corresponding to the candidate as either counted or not counted shall be subject to the specific guidelines to be issued by the RMAC.

If a ballot has an over-vote and/or under-vote and contains ambiguous marks, said ballot should be placed in the Envelope for Ballots with Ambiguous Shades.

c) In case of elections which will utilize DRE Voting Machine, the Chairperson shall read the votes on the VVPAT receipts as they are and make no appreciation thereof.

SECTION 20. *Manner of Counting of Votes.*

A. For Votes Cast Using the Automated Counting Machine

a) The RMAC shall proceed with the counting of votes for the following positions:

a.1. For Presidential Elections: President, Vice-President, Senator, Member House of Representatives, Mayor, Party-List, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) District Representatives and Regional Parliamentary Political Parties; and

a.2. For Midterm Elections: Senators, Member House of Representatives, Mayor, Party-List, BARMM District Representatives and Regional

Parliamentary Political Parties.

b) The RMAAT shall examine each of the valid ballots for over-votes, under-votes, and ambiguous shades and form separate categories of ballots as follows:

- b.1. Ballots with Full/Adequate Shades for All Audited Positions;
- b.2. Ballots with Over-votes for Any of the Audited Positions;
- b.3. Ballots with Under-votes for Any of the Audited Positions; and
- b.4. Ballots with Ambiguous Shades for Any of the Audited Positions.

c) For each category of ballots, the Chairperson shall form separate piles of fifty (50) ballots. The Chairperson shall read votes or shades following the above-stated order of categories of ballots.

d) For every ballot, the Chairperson shall announce the votes cast. The Chairperson shall read first the audited position, then the number assigned to the candidate, followed by the candidate's name.

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 (4) vertical lines (*Taras*).

e) The Secretary shall accomplish the six (6) copies of the Audit Returns and respectively record thereon each vote read by the Chairperson, while the Third Member does the same on the Tally Board.

f) Over-votes shall not be counted in favor of any candidate for that position but shall be recorded as an over-vote. The Chairperson shall announce first the audited position then state "over-vote."

Each over-vote shall be recorded using *taras*.

After each pile has been read, the over-votes shall be added, and the sum recorded and encircled on the space immediately after the last vote recorded. The votes obtained by each candidate shall likewise be added.

The same procedure shall be followed with the succeeding piles until all ballots in the category are read.

g) For a multi-slot audited position, the Chairperson shall deduct the number of full/adequate shades from the allowed maximum number of seats for the position and announce the actual number of under-votes. The Secretary and Third Member shall record the under-votes as numbers in the Audit Returns and Tally Board, respectively. For a single slot audited position, the Chairperson shall announce the under-vote and the Secretary and Third Member shall record the under-votes as *taras*.

If there is a misplaced shade, which refers to a shade made by the voter

other than on the oval, the Chairperson shall announce the same. Misplaced shades shall be recorded on per occurrence per position basis. The Secretary and Third Member shall record misplaced shades under the "Yes" or "No" column per audited position.

After each pile has been read, the under-votes shall be added, and the sum recorded and encircled on the space immediately after the last vote recorded.

The same procedure shall be followed with the succeeding piles until all ballots in the category are read.

h) The Chairperson shall proceed with the Ballots with Ambiguous Shades for Any of the Audited Positions category.

The Chairperson shall determine whether the ambiguous shades are counted or not counted based on the specific guidelines to be issued by the RMAC. After said determination, the Chairperson shall announce first "Ambiguous Shades Counted/Not Counted" then the audited position, the number assigned to the candidate, followed by the candidate's name.

The Secretary and Third Member shall record the ambiguous shades as counted or not counted in *taras*.

After each pile has been read, the ambiguous shades, counted and not counted, and votes obtained by each candidate shall be added and the sum recorded and encircled on the space immediately after the last vote recorded.

i) After all the ballots or VVPAT receipts have been read, the Secretary and Third Member shall compute and record, in words and figures, the total number of votes obtained by each candidate in the Audit Returns and the Tally Board. The total number of votes obtained by each candidate shall be the sum of the total number of full/adequate shades and ambiguous shades counted.

The Secretary and Third Member shall then compute and record, in words and figures, the total number of over-votes, under-votes, and ambiguous shades not counted.

The Secretary and Third Member shall then compare their tallies. In case of variance, they shall review the counting procedure and resolve the variance.

j) The Chairperson, under the strict supervision of the RMA Verifiers, shall enter the AES results, as reflected in the Election Returns, for the respective audited positions, in the Audit Minutes.

The Chairperson, under the strict supervision of the RMA Verifiers, shall then compare the AES results with the RMA results to determine if a variance exists.

k) In case the RMA results do not match the AES results, the RMA members shall review all ballots and the corresponding entries in the Audit

Returns for purposes of excluding the possibility of human error.

After determining that human error was not committed as having caused the variance, the Chairperson shall determine if the total number of VVPAT receipts is equal to the total number of valid ballots. If so, the RMA members shall use the VVPAT receipts to count the votes counted in favor of the candidate with the reported variance. If the number of VVPAT receipts is not equal to the number of total ballots counted inside the ballot box, the variance shall be reported and documented.

1) If after the counting of votes in favor of the candidate/s with the reported variance using the VVPAT receipts, the variance still exists, the assigned RMA Verifiers shall provide notes and reasons in the RMA Minutes.

Upon conclusion of the RMA, all RMA members shall affix their signatures on the RMA Minutes, Tally Board, and Audit Returns attesting to the contents thereof. RMA Supervisors shall witness the recording of entries and affixing of signatures of the RMA members. The Chairperson shall immediately notify the RMA Supervisors of the results of the RMA, who in turn, shall report the same to the RMAC.

B. For Votes Cast Through the Online Voting and Counting Systems

a) The RMA shall proceed with the counting of votes for the following positions:

a.1. For Presidential Elections: President, Vice-President, Senator, Party-List; and

a.2. For Midterm Elections: Senators and Party-List.

b) The procedure for the manner of counting of ballots during the audit shall be governed by a Supplemental COMELEC Resolution.

SECTION 21. *Minutes and Audit Returns of RMA.*

Minutes of the RMA:

a) The Chairperson shall accomplish three (3) copies of the Minutes of the RMA, accurately entering therein all data required as they become available and all acts or events as they occur.

b) Copies of the Minutes shall be signed by all RMA members, RMA Verifiers and RMA Supervisors, and sealed in separate clearly labeled envelopes for distribution, as follows:

b.1. The original copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box.

b.2. One (1) copy intended for the Commission on Elections shall be delivered to the Records and Statistics Division (RSD) of the Election Records and

Statistics Department (ERSD), COMELEC, Intramuros, Manila.

b.3. One (1) copy intended for the RMA Committee shall be delivered to the RMA Supervisors.

Audit Returns:

a) The Secretary shall accomplish six (6) copies of the Audit Returns by accurately entering therein the votes obtained by each candidate.

b) Copies of the Audit Returns shall be signed by all RMA members, RMA Verifiers and RMA Supervisors, and sealed in separate clearly labeled envelopes for distribution, as follows:

b.1. The original copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box.

b.2. One (1) copy intended for the Commission shall be delivered to the Records and Statistics Division (RSD) of the Election Records and Statistics Department (ERSD), COMELEC, Intramuros, Manila.

b.3. One (1) intended for the RMA Committee shall be delivered to the RCG of the RMA Center.

b.4. One (1) copy for the Dominant Majority Political Party.

b.5. One (1) copy for the Dominant Minority Political Party.

b.6. One (1) copy for the CSPO.

SECTION 22. *Closing Procedure.* The following shall be observed:

a) The RMA shall return the ballots in the ballot box.

b) All Electoral Board reports, documents, forms, the Minutes of Testing and Sealing, the Minutes of Voting and Counting, and the receptacle for VVPAT receipts previously opened shall be resealed using the security seals provided in the RMA Kit.

c) One (1) copy of the Audit Returns used during the conduct of the RMA shall be sealed in a clearly labeled envelope and placed inside the ballot box. The Tally Board shall also be placed in the ballot box.

d) The Chairperson shall lock the ballot box with security seals. The serial number of the security seal shall be recorded in the RMA Minutes before closing the ballot box.

e) RMA members shall turn over the ballot box to the RMA Supervisors for safekeeping.

SECTION 23. *Variance Between AES and RMA.* In the event that the RMA reports a variance between the AES and RMA results which exceeds the allowable margin of an aggregate difference of ten (10) votes, the RMA Verifiers shall:

a) Analyze the findings of the RMA;

b) Perform manual counting of ballots or VVPAT receipts for the position with variance in the RMA and the AES count following the procedure determined by the RMAC;

c) Record manual counting activity in the RMA Minutes;

d) Return the box to the RMA Supervisors upon a finding that the variance does not actually exist or it was due to a mere mathematical error; and

e) In the event of a finding that the variance exists or such variance is not due to mere mathematical error, the RMAC shall turn over the ballot box to the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) for determination of the root cause.

SECTION 24. *Effect of Variance Between AES and RMA.* In no way shall the results of the RMA delay the proclamation of the winning candidates based on the results reached by the AES.

SECTION 25. *Retrieval Reception and Transport of Ballot Boxes.*

a) Each province, and in the National Capital Region, each city or municipality shall have an RMA-RDT. Highly urbanized cities outside the National Capital Region shall not have a separate RMA-RDT but shall be consolidated with the relevant province.

b) The Regional Election Directors of the Commission shall be obligated to:

b.1. constitute the RMA-RDT in each province, and in the National Capital Region, each city or municipality;

b.2. submit **Retrieval and Delivery Plans**, which consider the terrain and peculiarity of each province, and in the National Capital Region, each city or municipality, to the RMAC on or before the last week of January of the Election Year; and

b.3. assign permanent employees of COMELEC who shall act as the Reception and Custody Group of the RMA-RDT (RCG of the RMA-RDT).

c) The RMA-RDT shall be composed of the following officials:

c.1. the Regional Election Director, as head of the Team;

c.2. the Provincial Election Supervisor, for provinces; and

c.3. the Election Officer/s and Treasurer/s of the randomly selected city/municipality.

All the members of the RMA-RDT shall be jointly responsible for ensuring the secure and transparent retrieval and delivery of ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts for audit to the RMA Center and its return to the respective City/Municipal Treasurer's custody.

The Retrieval and Delivery Plan/s shall be made public in accordance with

paragraph (h) hereof. Representatives of Registered Political Parties, Accredited Citizen's Arm Groups, and candidates may witness all the processes and movement of the ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts from the City/Municipal Treasurers' Offices to the RMA Center and its return to the respective City/Municipal Treasurer's custody provided that they follow security protocols and shoulder costs of observation.

d) The **Retrieval and Delivery Plans** shall indicate the specific time of retrieval of ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precinct/s from the relevant City/Municipal Treasurer's Offices, specific location within their jurisdiction where the RCG of the RMA-RDT shall receive the ballot box/es, the method of transport from the City/Municipal Treasurer's Office to the Reception and Custody Group of the RMA-RDT and other relevant information.

e) Immediately upon receipt of the specific list of the randomly selected clustered precinct/s to be audited under their jurisdiction from the Provincial Election Supervisor, the Election Officer and City/Municipal Treasurer members of the RMA-RDT shall proceed to secure the relevant ballot box/es and place two RMA Stickers on each side thereof.

The Election Officer and City/Municipal Treasurer members of the RMA-RDT shall deliver the ballot box of the randomly selected clustered precinct/s to the RCG of the RMA-RDT, which shall be stationed at the Office of the Provincial Election Supervisor or Office of the Election Officer, in case of National Capital Region, or in some other office designated in the Retrieval and Delivery Plan.

The RCG of the RMA-RDT shall issue a Certification to the Election Officer and City/Municipal Treasurer members of the RMA-RDT upon receipt of the ballot boxes.

f) The RCG of the RMA-RDT shall strictly maintain a record of the delivery and receipt of ballot boxes indicating the following:

f.1. date and time of receipt;

f.2. randomly selected city/municipality;

f.3. voting center;

f.4. barangay;

f.5. randomly selected clustered precinct/s;

f.6. number of clustered precinct/s;

f.7. names and signatures of the persons who delivered the ballot box/es;

f.8. names and signatures of representatives of Registered Political Parties, Accredited Citizen's Arm Groups, and candidates who witnessed the delivery of the ballot box/es.

All three permanent employees who acted as the RCG of the RMA-RDT shall sign

the record.

The RCG of the RMA-RDT shall complete all ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts in the province, or city/municipality in the National Capital Region prior to transportation to the RMA Center.

g) The Provincial Election Supervisor, or in case of the National Capital Region, the Election Officer member of the RMA-RDT shall deliver the following to the RMA Center:

g.1. the complete number of ballot boxes of the randomly selected clustered precincts under their jurisdiction; and

gf.2. the duly accomplished record of deliveries and receipt maintained by the RCG of the RMA-RDT under paragraph e hereof.

In the event of their unavailability due to other pressing functions, the Provincial Election Supervisor, or in the case of the National Capital Region, the Election Officer member of the RMA-RDT may designate another permanent employee of the Commission to deliver the ballot boxes, provided that they inform the RMA Supervisors.

h) All Offices of the Regional Election Directors, Provincial Election Supervisors, and Election Officers shall post in their bulletin boards and implement other methods to inform stakeholders of the Retrieval and Delivery Plan/s, which cover/s the area of the jurisdiction.

i) All Retrieval and Delivery Plans required herein shall be incorporated in the Regional Joint Security Control Centers, Provincial Joint Security Control Centers, City Joint Security Control Centers, and Municipal Security Control Centers Security Plans.

j) After the audit of the ballot boxes, they shall be returned to the appropriate City/Municipal Treasurer's Office within its respective jurisdictions by the Reverse Logistics Team.

The RMA-Technical Working Group is tasked with establishing the composition of the Reverse Logistics Team, with the approval of the Commissioner-in-Charge for the RMA.

The members of the Reverse Logistics Team shall also be jointly responsible for ensuring the secure delivery of the ballot boxes assigned to them to the respective City/Municipal Treasurer's custody.

SECTION 26. Reportorial Requirements. Not later than ninety days (90) upon the completion of the audit, the head of the RMAC shall submit all the reportorial requirements to the Commissioner-in-Charge of the RMA.

SECTION 27. Effectivity and Dissemination. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its publication in two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in

the Philippines.

The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this Resolution and shall furnish copies thereof to all Regional Election Directors, Provincial Election Supervisors and Elections Officers, as well as to other RMA partner agencies/groups/organizations.

SO ORDERED.

GEORGE ERWIN M. GARCIA

Chairman

SOCORRO B. INTING

Commissioner

MARLON S. CASQUEJO

Commissioner

AIMEE P. FEROLINO

Commissioner

REY E. BULAY

Commissioner

ERNESTO FERDINAND P. MACEDA, JR.

Commissioner

NELSON J. CELIS

Commissioner

CERTIFICATION

APPROVED for Publication, December 12, 2024.


CONSUELO B. DIOLA

Director IV

Office of the Commission Secretary

This Resolution can be verified at this number (02) 85272987; email address at comsec@comelec.gov.ph

Republic of the Philippines
 COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
 Random Manual Audit

Challenge on the Decisions/Actions of RMA Supervisors

Date: _____

Voting Center: _____

Clustered Precinct No: _____

Ballot Box No: _____

Date: _____

Name of RMA Supervisor/s: _____

Name of RMAT

1. Chairperson: _____

2. Poll Clerk:

3. Third Member: _____

Ground/s for the Challenge:

[illegible]

(State the facts and nature or ground for challenge.)

Name and Signature of Verifier/s