

PRESS RELEASE**DepEd Statement on ACT's allegations**

PASIG CITY, March 8, 2019 - The Department of Education (DepEd) expresses its disappointment with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) over its statement alleging that local DepEd officials have been declaring the ineligibility of ACT union members to be part of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) in the upcoming midterm polls.

Reading closely ACT's statement (https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2294958343876677&id=330978226941375), we see its internal inconsistencies, and the resulting disinformation and malicious imputations. It acknowledges in the statement itself that their allegations are not validated. It is based on "reported", and "purported" acts. The name of the organization they cite (Alliance of Concerned Teachers) is not even their organization.

Yet based on its bare allegations, it proceeds to condemn the acts as "yet another attack against teachers' right to self-organization and a dirty attempt to persecute ACT."

Through misleading allegations, they craftily besmirch DepEd, a government agency of which they are part as teachers. It is saddening that such besmirching of the institution through bare, at times outrightly false allegations, is being done by ACT in statements like these both inside and outside the country, and in the rallies they conduct.

Before condemning, ACT should come forward with specific and validated incidents when alleged DepEd local officials prohibited election service of their members who are public school teachers.

There had been no issuance by DepEd Central Office prohibiting members of ACT or any teachers' unions/associations and announcing their ineligibility to serve as part of the electoral boards in the upcoming midterm polls.

It is the Alliance of Concerned Teachers that should clarify whether or not its members are, at the same time, members of the ACT Teachers Party-list because they appear to be intimately connected. For instance, current ACT Teachers Party-list second nominee Benjamin Valbuena used to serve as National Chairperson of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

Such distinction is relevant in the matter of membership in the electoral boards. If teachers are members of the ACT Teachers Party-list, then the disqualification under Article IX-C Section 8 of the Constitution may apply.

The said provision states that "political parties, or organizations or coalitions registered under the party-list system, shall not be represented in the voter's registration boards, boards of election inspectors, boards of canvassers, or other similar bodies. However, they shall be entitled to appoint poll watchers in accordance with the law."

We emphasize that it is the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), through the Election Officers, which shall constitute and appoint the electoral boards. Thus, the clarification on this matter is best addressed by ACT to COMELEC.

Relatedly, it may be asked whether membership of public school teachers and other government employees in an electoral party, such as party-lists, does not violate the laws prohibiting civil servants from engaging in partisan political activities. Again, this is an issue best addressed to COMELEC, and the Civil Service Commission.

END

Reference:

Undersecretary Nepomuceno A. Malaluan

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