



## ***Political Environment of the 2007 Elections***

The 2007 national and local elections cover the following positions: one half of the Senate or 12 Senate positions; at least 215 positions for single-district representation in the House of Representatives; a maximum of 53 positions for party-list representation in the House of Representatives; 81 positions for provincial governor and vice-governor; more than 750 positions for provincial board members; more than 1,600 positions for mayor, vice-mayor; and more than 13,300 positions for municipal board members.

Among these, the most crucial are the elections for the single-district and party-list representation in the House of Representatives. These elections have a decisive bearing on the burning issue of the legitimacy of the presidency of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. If the anti-GMA opposition obtains at least one-third of the seats in the lower House (estimated to be 80 seats), it is in a position to push for the impeachment of the president in the coming 14<sup>th</sup> Congress. Given a possible majority of more than two-thirds of the seats in the Senate, the anti-GMA opposition may well complete the impeachment process and vote out Ms. Macapagal-Arroyo from office.

The present political crisis of the presidency stemmed from controversy surrounding her electoral victory in the 2004 presidential election and the questions of credibility of the electoral process and its management by the Commission on Elections. In a survey issued last July 2006, the Social Weather Station disclosed the Commission on Elections has a “very bad” rating of -50% for insincerity in fighting corruption. The last Pulse Asia survey on the matter in March 2006 found out that 52% of all Filipinos want the members of the 2004 Commission on Elections to resign.

The 2007 elections are the first national elections since the questioned 2004 elections. These elections are being carried out under big clouds of doubt—first, on the credibility of the election manager; and second, on the credibility of the electoral process that produced a controversial and not-yet-settled presidential electoral result.

The coming elections will be held under somewhat similar circumstances as in 2004 elections. Three commissioners in the 2004 elections are still around, including Chairman Benjamin Abalos, Jr. The same manual electoral system will be used, despite the approval of RA 9369, a new electoral modernization law. The government people cited in the so-called “Garcillano tapes” are not only still in service but have been promoted to various key positions within the Commission on Elections, in the military and in the bureaucracy. The failed attempt to stop the 2007 election through charter change initiatives only added suspicion on the credibility of the coming elections.

Given these circumstances, every citizen is called upon to guard his or her own vote and ensure that it is counted.