

FACTCHECK 2016 #3

Political and Electoral Reforms

Access to elective posts in the country continues to be concentrated in the hands of a few despite the Constitutional guarantee of equal rights to suffrage that refers not only to the right to vote, but also to run for public office. A 2011 study of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) says that at least seven out of every 15 legislators (almost 50%) are members of families that can be considered political dynasties. Pera't Punitika, an initiative of various civil society organizations to monitor campaign finance in 2008, provides the following estimates on how much it takes to run for key public posts in the country: city mayor: PhP10 million; governor: PhP5-150 million; senator: PhP150-500 million; and president: PhP2.5-5 Billion. This clearly demonstrates how elections in the country have largely been ruled by money.

The AIM study in 2011 also establishes that legislators from political dynasties, while wealthier than the rest, are mostly coming from districts with higher and more intense poverty levels. According to the said study, poverty incidence (24% vs. 19%), poverty gap (6.18 vs. 4.93), and poverty severity (2.31 vs. 1.86) are significantly higher in dynastic districts than non-dynastic ones. This indicates a symbiotic relationship between poverty and political monopoly.

A study of the Political Democracy and Reforms (PODER) program of the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG) in 2011 shows that of the 123 personalities identified by the Independent Commission against Private Armies (ICAPA) as leaders of the 107 groups of private armies existing in the country as of 2010, 76% of these (a total of 93 personalities) are local politicians belonging to traditional political dynasties. The same study also shows that provincial election hotspot which regularly experience high frequency of election-related violence incidences are also the local polities, which are ruled by entrenched clans.

Meanwhile, a study of The World Bank in 2013 by Stuti Khemani establishes empirically that, "in places where households report more vote

buying, government records show that municipalities invest less in basic health services for mothers and children." The said study also establishes that a higher percentage of children are severely underweight in municipalities where there is weak health service delivery performance, thereby showing how vote-buying affects health outcomes.

All these studies clearly show the inter-relatedness of political monopoly, uncompetitive and violent elections that undermine the sovereign will and underdevelopment, which makes political and electoral reform a crucial agenda in the country.

An electoral system that facilitates the contest among programmatic options through platform-based parties and is sensitive to the performance of those who previously held power will have a better chance at ensuring the victory of those who will and can sustain good programs and effective strategies in governance that constitute substantive reforms. Regulating political monopolies through an anti-dynasty law, development of programmatic parties through a party law and strengthening of campaign finance regulations are critical reform agenda in achieving inclusive democracy and sustainable development.

What are the position, platform and track record of the presidential and vice presidential candidates on political and electoral reform?

Presidential Candidates

Poe, Roxas and Santiago are all in favor of an anti-dynasty legislation. Binay is not against political dynasties "as long as they win elections fairly." He also asserts that dynastic politics doesn't cause poverty. Duterte considers the anti-dynasty bill "undemocratic."

Only Santiago has a clear position on campaign finance and election spending. She believes that politicians spending on political ads are a sign of corruption. Duterte said that he will not accept campaign donations from business with dealings with government.

Only Santiago has a clear position on political party reforms. According to Santiago, the state

should fund political parties and should penalize turncoatism, while parties must be held accountable for erring members in government.

None of the presidential candidates mention party and electoral reforms in their platform. Only Santiago mentioned the need to pass an anti-dynasty law and campaign finance regulation law in her platform.

Only Miram Defensor-Santiago has a clear track record on anti-dynasty. She authored bills that aim to remove political dynasties at both the local and national levels. Only Santiago has a clear track record on campaign finance and election spending regulation by sponsoring a campaign finance reform bill. Poe and Santiago have track records on pushing for political party reforms. Santiago authored a party reform bill, while Poe supported the said bill and included in her 2010 platform the “strengthening (of) the multi-party system by state-sponsored mechanisms for party organization, funding, candidate nomination, party loyalty, (and) party discipline.”

Vice Presidential Candidates

Robredo and Honasan are in favor of an anti-dynasty legislation. Cayetano and Marcos are against it. Escudero and Trillanes have no clear position on the issue.

No candidate has raised the issue of campaign finance and election spending.

Honasan, Cayetano and Trillanes are in favor of a political party development law. Escudero is opposed to public financing of political parties. There are no available information regarding the respective position of Robredo and Marcos on the issue.

Only Robredo mentioned anti-dynasty as her platform/priority. She considers this to be part of good governance.

No candidate mentioned anything about campaign finance and election spending in their platform/priority.

No candidate mentioned political party reforms as part of their platform or priority.

Only Robredo has a solid track record on pushing for the anti-dynasty agenda. No candidate has any track record on pushing for the campaign finance and election spending issue. Only Trillanes has a track record in pushing for a political party reform legislation.

What is FactCheck 2016?

FactCheck is a continuing project of the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG), through its Political Democracy Reforms (PODER) and Government Watch (G-Watch) programs, that provides verified information on candidate’s position, platform and track record as a voter’s basis in making their decisions on who to vote and what issues and agenda to further advance. Now on its third cycle, the 2016 FactCheck, as in the previous 2010 and 2013 elections, probes candidate’s position, platform and track record on key issues and agenda identified through consultations with organizations at the local and national levels. It highlights and mainstreams critical issues in the election agenda to contribute in making elections issue- and platform-oriented.

FactCheck 2016 focuses on 10 issues:

- Agriculture, fisheries development and agrarian reform
- Participatory and pro-poor budgeting (BuB)
- The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)
- Political and Electoral Reforms
- Meaningful youth participation
- Education and Health Services to Vulnerable Sectors
- Social Justice for the Bangsamoro and the Indigenous Peoples (IPs)
- Urban Development
- Environmental-ecological Protection and disaster risk and reduction management (DRRM)
- Anti-corruption

The following process was undertaken in coming up with the FactChecks:

- A formal letters were sent out to all the candidates requesting for their position, platform and track record on the agenda we

identified.

- Based on the input from the candidates, we did the ‘fact-checking’ by checking on official reports and documents and reports from credible newspapers/ online media. For the candidates who did not send their inputs, our take off point was their official website.
- We then processed the data using a processing table and following our measures and indicators.

Factcheck 2016

Measures and Indicators

Position refers to the candidates’ pronouncements about the agenda that can be found in printed materials like news, statements or online. We determine whether the candidate is for, against or neutral.

Platform refers to the candidates’ plans in tackling the agenda as stated in their official platform. We determine whether the agenda is mentioned, not mentioned in the platform.

Track record refers to the direct action taken by the candidates in advancing/ realizing the agenda. We determine whether the candidates’ track record is concrete, not concrete, no record or opposition based on whether the candidates has taken direct action in terms of bills filed, laws passed, decisions made, programs/ projects personally/ directly championed as stated in official or reliable/ verifiable records. We mark the candidates’ track record ‘opposition’ if s/he has taken an opposition position on the agenda.

- After a researcher prepared the data processing table, at least two other researchers peer reviewed the data and the briefer. We then prepared the infographics and finalized the briefer for posting on FactCheck 2016 Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/factcheck2016/>).
- The final checking was crowdsourced. We

allowed anyone using the online platform (Facebook) to point to us any credible source that would correct any wrong data on our FactCheck. Upon receiving such feedback, we checked the source, verified it and corrected the FactCheck (if needed), indicating the correction we made.

Note: The data and figures can still be updated and we are open to additional sources from anyone. Please contact us through our FB page.

PODER/ G-Watch deems FactCheck 2016 mainly as a platform to mainstream critical issues and agenda identified through studies and consultations of PODER/ G-Watch and to facilitate the exchange of citizens and politicians on these issues and agenda.

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