

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

SECOND DIVISION

IN RE: PETITION FOR
REGISTRATION UNDER THE
PARTY-LIST SYSTEM AS A
SECTORAL PARTY UNDER SPP Case No. 12-164 (PL)
REPUBLIC ACT NO 7941
otherwise known as “THE
PARTY-LIST SYSTEM ACT”,

ANG PROLIFE (“Ang Prolife”),
represented by its Secretary
General, James M. Imbong,
Petitioner.

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VERIFIED OPPOSITION

Oppositors, representatives of the Filipino Freethinkers,
interpose their vehement opposition to the Petition for Registration of
Ang Prolife, and in support thereof state that:

1. This is a verified opposition to the petition for registration
filed by Ang Prolife, an association that purports to be a
sectoral party, when in truth and in fact, it as an association
organized for religious purposes. Ang Prolife’s accreditation
as party-list is against the law and the Constitution: Its

registration makes a mockery of the party-list system that was originally conceived as a social justice tool designed to empower the marginalized and underrepresented sectors in Philippine society. Worse, its registration violates the Constitutional principle of secularism as implemented in Republic Act 7941.¹

2. The oppositors are filing this case in their personal capacity as citizens, taxpayers and registered voters, and as representatives of the members of Filipino Freethinkers, an association of nonbelievers and progressive believers who value reason, Science, and secularism.²

JURISDICTIONAL ALLEGATIONS

3. On 30 March 2012, Ang Prolife, purporting to be a sectoral organization, filed a Petition for Registration before this Honorable Commission seeking to be accredited as a sectoral party under Republic Act 7941. On 31 May 2012, the Petition was heard and the oppositors were given ten (10) days within which to submit their formal opposition. Since the last day of filing the opposition falls on a Sunday, oppositors have

¹ The Part-List System Act.

² <http://filipinofreethinkers.org/>

until the next working day, 11 June 2012, within which to submit their opposition. This Verified Opposition is filed within the period allowed by the Honorable Commission. Oppositors certify that they have paid the filing fee and legal research fee required under Section 5, Rule 2 of COMELEC Resolution No. 9366³ upon filing of the instant opposition.

GROUND FOR OPPOSITION

4. The oppositors vehemently opposes Ang Prolife's petition for registration on the following grounds:
 - a. Ang Prolife is an organization or association organized for religious purposes masquerading as a sectoral organization. Its registration as party-list organization violates the R.A. 7941 and Article II, Section 6, and Article VI, Section 5 (2) of the 1987 Constitution.
 - b. Ang Prolife has made untruthful statements in its Petition when it claimed that (1) it is a national sectoral organization; (2) that it is not a religious sect of denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes; and (3) that its nominees have all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications of party-list nominees.⁴

³ Rules and Regulations Governing the: 1) Filing of Petitions for Registration; 2) Filing of Manifestation of Intent to Participate; 3) Submission of Names of Nominees; and 4) Filing of Disqualification Cases against Nominees of Party-List Groups or Organizations Participating Under the Party-List System of Representation in Connection with the May 13, 2013 National and Local Elections, and Subsequent Elections Thereafter.

⁴ See paragraphs 8, 9, and 13 of the Petition and Annexes "E" to "J-1" inclusive.

- c. Ang Prolife failed to comply with laws, rules or regulations relating to elections when it did not include in its petition the supporting documents required under Section 7, Rule 1⁵ and Section 1, Rule 4⁶ of COMELEC Resolution No. 9366.

DISCUSSION

Ang Prolife is an organization or association organized for religious purposes masquerading as a sectoral organization. Its

⁵ Sec. 7. Documents to support petition for registration. – The following documents shall support petitions for registration:

- a. Constitution and by-laws as an organization seeking registration under the party-list system of registration;
- b. Platform or program of government;
- c. List of all its officers and members (national , regional, provincial, city/municipal) particularly showing that the majority of its membership and officers belong to the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s it seeks to represent;
- d. Manifestation of intent to participate in the next immediately succeeding national and local elections, and the list of at least five (5) nominees.
- e. Articles of Incorporation, by-laws and Certificate of Registration issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) if registered therewith.
- f. Track record summary showing that it represents and seeks to uplift the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s it seeks to represent;
- g. Coalition agreement, if any, and the detailed list of affiliates comprising the coalition, including the coalition agreement;
- h. Sworn proof/s of existence in the areas where the organization is claiming representation; and
- i. Other information required by the Commission.

⁶ Sec. 1. Qualifications of nominees. xx xxx xxx The party-list group and the nominees must submit documentary evidence in consonance with the Constitution, R.A. 7941 and other laws to duly prove that the nominees truly belong to the marginalized sector and underrepresented sector/s, the sectoral party, organization, political party, or coalition they seek to represent, which may include but not limited to the following:

- a. Track record of the party-list group/organization showing active participation of the nominee/s in the undertakings of the party-list group/organization for the advancement of the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s, the sectoral party, organization, political party or coalition they seek to represent;
- b. Proofs that the nominee/s truly adheres to the advocacies of the party-list group/organizations (prior declarations, speeches, written articles, and such other positive actions on the part of the nominee/s showing his/her adherence to the advocacies of the party-list groups/organizations);
- c. Certification that the nominee/s is/are bona-fide member of the party-list group/organization for at least ninety (90) days prior to the election; and
- d. In case of a party-list group/organization seeking representation of the marginalized and underrepresented sectors, proof that the nominee/s is not only an advocate of the party-list/organization but is/are also bona fide member/s of said marginalized and underrepresented sector.

**registration as party-list organization
violates the R.A. 7941 and Article II, Section
6, and Article VI, Section 5 (2) of the 1987
Constitution**

5. Ang Prolife alleges that it is a sectoral organization of voters bound by a similar interest to promote, protect, and preserve the total development of the Filipino family and its members from the moment of their conception. It claims to represent the private sector of the family who lack well-defined political constituencies to become members of the House of Representatives.⁷

6. Ang Prolife masks its nature as an association organized for religious purposes by hiding behind these general allegations. Documents obtained by the oppositors readily unmask Ang Prolife and expose it for what it is: a religious organization or association organized for religious purposes.

Consider the following:

- a. In its platform of government, "Reclaiming a Culture of Life," Ang Prolife declares that its members hold "their convictions upon a common belief in one Almighty God." This readily shows that Ang Prolife is organized for a religious purpose.
- b. Its legislative agenda is focused on the "defense of life against all legislations and policies that seek to legalize

⁷ See paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Petition.

or institutionalize abortion, un-reproductive health rights, divorce, same-sex unions, depopulation, radical feminism, public child sex education, pornography, euthanasia.” This “legislative agenda” re-echoes the position of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church leadership on the foregoing issues.

- c. Ang Prolife’s official party-list declaration, is embedded in a page in www.cbcpforlife.com, a website that was initiated by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Media Office. This website likewise contains numerous position papers of the Catholic Church on hot-button issues for the religious.
- d. Ang Prolife’s affiliate organizations are Catholic organizations that work for the Catholic Church. For instance, Pro-Life Philippines’ mission is to “build a nation that respects, defends and cares for human life including the environment by **working closely with the Catholic church.**” Its vision includes “promoting a culture of life and love **in accordance with the Catholic church teachings.**” In the case of Alliance for the Family Foundation, Phils. (ALFI), its website, <http://alfi.org.ph>, serves as a platform for the dissemination of CBCP news articles.⁸ ALFI’s newsletter also serves as vehicles for preaching Catholic doctrines.⁹ The same is true with Human Life International (HLI) whose website, www.hli.org,¹⁰ is a platform for spreading Catholic teachings. Found in this website is a “missionary report” written by a certain Brian Clowes, and dated January 2-12, 2010.¹¹ The report contains replete references to the Catholic Church and ends with “You can be assured that we at Human Life International are doing absolutely everything we can to keep **Catholic Philippines** pro-life.” Finally, the religious nature of Ang Prolife and

⁸ Annex “1”

⁹ Attached as Annexes “2” “2-A” and “2-B” are sample ALFI News obtained from the ALFI website.

¹⁰ Annexes “3” “3-A” “3-B” are screen grabs of the HLI website.

¹¹ Annex “4”.

its affiliate becomes even more glaring in the case of Knights of Columbus. In a document “Indoctrination to the Knights of Columbus,”¹² the organization is described as a “catholic, family, fraternal, and service organization.” Its members must be practicing catholic – “a person who follows the **Ten Commandments** and observes the **Precepts of the Church** in union with the **Holy See**.”

These are only few examples of the public declarations and activities undertaken by Ang Prolife and its affiliates. Undoubtedly, these organizations consistently pursued religious activities and promoted Roman Catholic doctrines. Ang Prolife, therefore, is a religious organization or an association organized for religious purposes that cannot be accredited as a party-list organization.

7. Ang Prolife president, Eric Manalang, in his testimony during the 31 May 2012 hearing, confirms the fact that Ang Prolife is an association organized for religious purposes.
8. In his testimony, Eric Manalang constantly made reference to his Catholic beliefs when asked to explain the group’s position on various issues in which the hierarchy of the Philippine Catholic Church, particularly the Catholic

¹² <http://www.kofc.org.ph> , last accessed 11 June 2012, 12:03am. This is attached herewith as Annex “5”. Also attached as Annex “5-A” is a screen grab of the Knights of Columbus website showing members of the organization joining the Diocese of Cabanatuan in the opening celebration of their Golden Jubilee Anniversary.

Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has publicly taken a strong position against. These include the current proposed Reproductive Health bill, Divorce bill, and issues on homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Despite Manalang's effort to insulate his group from its obvious sectarian lines, by calculated mentions of OFW's as their main concern, Ang Prolife's true color was shown by his obvious Catholic stance.

9. Manalang espoused no clear policy proposal or intended legislation that will benefit the nation as a whole. His general remarks pertaining to OFW families is a far cry from other legitimate sectors that wish to join the ranks of party-list representatives. What is clear with Manalang's testimony is Ang Prolife's strong and adamant intention to push for advocacies based on position of the leadership of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church.

10. Thus, Ang Prolife's claim of being a secular organization should be given scant consideration when viewed in light of how the group's president betrayed their real intention in seeking the party-list elections -- that is, to secure for their clearly-religious association an assured congressional

representation and vote on the abovementioned controversial bills.

11.The 1987 Constitution and R.A. 7941 prohibit religious organizations from participating in party-list elections and both the Constitution and the law excludes religious organizations from being accredited as party-list organizations.

12.Article II, Section 6 of the Constitution commands that “The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.” Reading this provision in conjunction with Article IX-C, Section 2 (5)¹³ and Article VI, Section 5 (2)¹⁴, the Constitutional fiat cannot be any clearer: religious organizations and associations organized for religious purposes cannot participate in the elections much less can it be voted as party-list organization.

¹³ Section 2 (5), Article IX-C. Register, after sufficient publication, political parties, organizations, or coalitions which, in addition to other requirements, must present their platform or program of government; and accredit citizens' arms of the Commission on Elections. **Religious denominations and sects shall not be registered.** Those which seek to achieve their goals through violence or unlawful means, or refuse to uphold and adhere to this Constitution, or which are supported by any foreign government shall likewise be refused registration. xxx

¹⁴ Section 5(2), Article VI. (2) The party-list representatives shall constitute twenty per centum of the total number of representatives including those under the party list. For three consecutive terms after the ratification of this Constitution, one-half of the seats allocated to party-list representatives shall be filled, as provided by law, by selection or election from the labor, peasant, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, women, youth, and such other sectors as may be provided by law, **except the religious sector.**

13.The prohibition banning religious groups or organizations established for religious purposes from participating in the party-list elections is a recognition of the fundamental and long established principle of separation of Church and State. More specifically, this is a direct application of the non-establishment clause found in Article III, Section 5 of the 1987 Constitution, which reads:

Section 5. No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.

14.Needless to state, allowing religious organizations to participate in party-list elections, which opens an opportunity for them to win a seat and representation in Congress, is tantamount to a State sanction of an established religion. This cannot be done in light of the abovementioned constitutional provision. Our representatives in the legislative body of the government are expected to work on purely secular and State-related concerns. There is no place in Congress for any religious debate or what established churches deem right or wrong for the country. Indeed, each

and every faithful and pious individual has the right to express his opinion on issues surrounding proposals on legislation based on his own religious beliefs. But the venue of this discussion falls outside the confines of Congress. Otherwise, a grave violation of Church-State principles will be unavoidable.

15. Prof. Florin T. Hilbay of the UP College of Law explains the reason behind the Constitutional policy, thus:

“The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and the right of the religious to form associations for expressive activities. These are fundamental constitutional rights and are not subject to debate. But the Constitution’s recognition of the right to believe, exercise one’s religion, and organize religious groups does not extend to their accreditation as legislative vehicles such as party-list organizations. Private persons exercising their political liberty can express their religious views in the form of a conservative vote, but cannot form public organizations that can serve as organs of the State for creating laws. To allow religious organizations to become party-list organizations would violate the principle of secularism in Article II of the Constitution. This is because Congress is a secular platform of the State—it is, by constitutional design, an arena of public reason where views are (or at least, should be) open to rational evaluation, deliberation and contestation. A religious party-list in the legislature would violate the non-establishment clause because an accredited party-list organization is no longer just a private community of believers but an officially sanctioned and subsidized group. This is the kind of excessive entanglement between Church and State that the Constitution prohibits. Separating Church from State means

prohibiting agents of the Church from becoming agents of the State.”¹⁵

16. The foregoing Constitutional policy is reflected in Section 6 of R.A. 7941¹⁶ where the COMELEC is empowered to disallow the registration of an association organized for religious purposes. The COMELEC’s power to exclude religious organizations from registration necessarily includes the power to look into the real nature of the organization that seeks registration. It must not rely solely on the declarations of the association that seeks to be registered, but must also inquire into the core nature of the organization. Prof. Hilbay offers the following view:

“The principle of secularism is implemented in Republic Act 7941 or the Party-list System Act, Section 6 of which provides for the “removal” of a party-list organization if “it is a religious sect or denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes.” This disqualification is directed against two categories of party-list groups: (1) the out-and-out religious sect, and (2) an association which, though not formally a sect, is organized for religious purposes. In operational terms,

¹⁵ “Religious Participation in the Party-List” in <http://opinion.inquirer.net/30167/religious-participation-in-the-party-list> last accessed 11 June 2012.

¹⁶ Section 6. Refusal and/or Cancellation of Registration. The COMELEC may, motu proprio or upon verified complaint of any interested party, refuse or cancel, after due notice and hearing, the registration of any national, regional or sectoral party, organization or coalition on any of the following grounds:

(1) It is a religious sect or denomination, organization or association, organized for religious purposes; xxx xxx xxx

however, it is the second category of party-list organization that the Comelec should focus on because the various religious sects as such would never formally seek accreditation. **Whether or not a party-list group is organized for religious purposes is a question of fact and the Comelec is not bound by the declarations of an organization.**

The language of RA 7941 clearly empowers the Comelec to scrutinize an applicant for accreditation to determine whether a group is organized for religious purposes. This means that it can pierce the veil of formality and go beyond the superficial manifestations of purpose of an organization, look into the real substance of the legislative agenda of the applicant organization, and ask: Is this group organized for a religious purpose? The Comelec may look into: the history of advocacy of the organization in hot button topics for the religious, to ensure that it is not hiding behind a false purpose; the activities of the officers and nominees of the organization, to determine whether there is a clear nexus between the avowed purpose of the organization and the credentials of the officers and nominees; the association of the officers and nominees of the organization with sects and denominations, to determine whether their activities are inextricably intertwined with those of the church or sect they belong to; the source of funding of their past activities, to ascertain if they are simply acting as secular fronts of organized religion. This level of scrutiny is justified not only because of the Constitution and the party-list act, but also because of the jurisprudence created by the Supreme Court in the various party-list cases it has decided.¹⁷

17. Clearly, Ang Prolife's petition for registration cannot be granted without running afoul of these fundamental constitutional precepts.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

Ang Prolife has made untruthful statements in its Petition when it claimed that (1) it is a national sectoral organization; (2) that it is not a religious sect of denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes; and (3) that its nominees have all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications of party-list nominees.

18. Ang Prolife's registration as party-list should likewise be denied on the ground that it made untruthful statements in its Petition.

19. Contrary to its supposition that it is a national sectoral organization, Ang Prolife is still in the process of organizing, it does not have a national constituency, and it does not represent a marginalized sector of society.

20. In paragraph 17 of its petition, it asserts that it has been in existence for more than one (1) year prior to the filing of the Petition. However, in paragraph 9, Ang Prolife admits that "as of the date of filing of this Petition, the following chapters **are in the process of formalization**, where Chapter Coordinators have already been designated, with the respective Memorandum of Understanding **due for signing.**" The inherent inconsistencies in these assertions

betray the true state of Ang Prolife as an organization: it is a non-existent association when the Petition was filed.

21. Documents obtained from www.cbcpforlife.com reveal that up until the present, Ang Prolife is still in the stage of recruiting members.¹⁸

22. Also quite telling is the fact that Ang Prolife did not include any track record summary and sworn proofs of existence in the areas where it is claiming representation, as required under Section 7 (f) (h) of COMELEC Resolution 9366. Indeed, it cannot present anything because in truth and in fact, Ang Prolife is a non-existent association.

23. Clearly, Ang Prolife's declaration in its Petition that it has been in existence for more than one year prior to the filing of the petition is a blatant lie. On this score alone, the Petition ought to be dismissed pursuant to Section 6 (6) of R.A. 7941¹⁹ and Rule 2, Section 2 (g) of COMELEC Resolution 9366.

¹⁸ A screen grab of Ang Prolife's website showing that it is recruiting organizations and individuals as member is attached as Annex "6". Copies of its membership forms are attached as Annexes "6-A" and "6-B".

¹⁹ Section 6. Refusal and/or Cancellation of Registration. The COMELEC may, motu proprio or upon verified complaint of any interested party, refuse or cancel, after due notice and hearing, the registration of any national, regional or sectoral party, organization or coalition on any of the following grounds: xxx xxx xxx

(6) It declares untruthful statements in its petition; xxx xxx xxx.

24. Moreover, Ang Prolife does not represent any marginalized sector of the society. In its petition, it purports to represent the "Filipino family." This is not among the sectors recognized by law and jurisprudence to be entitled to party-list representation.

25. A brief review of relevant law and jurisprudence is in order.

26. R.A. 7941 lays down the following statutory policy:

"The State shall promote proportional representation in the election of representatives to the House of Representatives through a party-list system of registered national, regional and sectoral parties or organizations or coalitions thereof, which will enable Filipino citizens belonging to marginalized and under-represented sectors, organizations and parties, and who lack well-defined political constituencies but who could contribute to the formulation and enactment of appropriate legislation that will benefit the nation as a whole, to become members of the House of Representatives. Towards this end, the State shall develop and guarantee a full, free and open party system in order to attain the broadest possible representation of party, sectoral or group interests in the House of Representatives by enhancing their chances to compete for and win seats in the legislature, and shall provide the simplest scheme possible."

27. Explaining the statutory policy in *Ang Bagong Bayani et. al. v.*

COMELEC,²⁰ the Supreme Court declared that:

The foregoing provision mandates a state policy of promoting proportional representation by means of the Filipino-style party-list system, which will "enable" the

²⁰ G.R. NO. 147589, JUNE 26, 2001.

election to the House of Representatives of Filipino citizens,

1. who belong to marginalized and underrepresented sectors, organizations and parties; and

2. who lack well-defined constituencies; but

3. who could contribute to the formulation and enactment of appropriate legislation that will benefit the nation as a whole.

28. The sectors who are eligible to participate in the party-list

elections are those "marginalized and underrepresented" as

exemplified by the enumeration in Section 5 of the law;

namely, "labor, peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous

cultural communities, elderly, handicapped, women, youth,

veterans, overseas workers, and professionals." Supreme

Court adds that:

"... it is not enough for the candidate to claim representation of the marginalized and underrepresented, because representation is easy to claim and to feign. The party-list organization or party must factually and truly represent the marginalized and underrepresented constituencies mentioned in Section 5. Concurrently, the persons nominated by the party-list candidate-organization must be "Filipino citizens belonging to marginalized and underrepresented sectors, organizations and parties."

29. Applying these guideposts to this case, it is indubitable that

Ang Prolife cannot register under the party-list system. Ang

Prolife's composition generally consists of registered voters with a common ideology. It likewise states in its Petition that it seeks to represent the private sector of the Filipino family. This clearly falls short of the requirement of the group being represented as a marginalized or underrepresented sector.

30.First, "qualified voters" or the "private sector of the Filipino family" cannot be considered as a basic sector in the way this term is contemplated in the party-list law. The group is too huge and numerous in composition, which makes it unfitting to be even considered a sector. For the term sector connotes a more distinguishable set of individuals bound by similarities based on sociological, economic or political factors.

31.Second, the group does not even come close to the list of traditionally recognized marginalized and underrepresented sectors of society. Following the explanation of the High Court in *Ang Bagong Bayani*, and applying the rule on *ejusdem generis*, the sector sought to be represented by any party-list organizations should be in the same line as those mentioned in the Constitution and RA 7941, *i.e.* labor,

peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, elderly, handicapped, women, youth, veterans, overseas workers, and professionals. Ang Prolife failed to establish this.

32. Further, apart from its bare allegations, Ang Prolife never presented any evidence or proof of its being marginalized or underrepresented. As the Court said in *Ang Bagong Bayani*, the group seeking to join the party-list elections “must show -- through its constitution, articles of incorporation, bylaws, history, platform of government and track record -- that it represents and seeks to uplift marginalized and underrepresented sectors.” Verily, the High Court said, “majority of its membership should belong to the marginalized and underrepresented. And it must demonstrate that in a conflict of interests, it has chosen or is likely to choose the interest of such sectors.”

33. Ang Prolife may argue that it represents the “Filipino family” **who lack well-defined constituencies to become members of the House of Representatives.** The argument is futile. In *Ang Bagong Bayani*, the Court ruled that:

Finally, "lack of well-defined constituenc[y] " refers to the

absence of a traditionally identifiable electoral group, like voters of a congressional district or territorial unit of government. **Rather, it points again to those with disparate interests identified with the "marginalized or underrepresented."**

xxx xxx xxx

The intent of the Constitution is clear: to give genuine power to the people, not only by giving more law to those who have less in life, but more so by enabling them to become veritable lawmakers themselves. Consistent with this intent, the policy of the implementing law, we repeat, is likewise clear: "to enable Filipino citizens belonging to marginalized and underrepresented sectors, organizations and parties, x x x, to become members of the House of Representatives." Where the language of the law is clear, it must be applied according to its express terms.

xxx xxx xxx

While the enumeration of marginalized and underrepresented sectors is not exclusive, it demonstrates the clear intent of the law that not all sectors can be represented under the party-list system. xxx

Ang Prolife failed to comply with laws, rules or regulations relating to elections when it did not include in its petition the supporting documents required under Section 7, Rule 1 and Section 1, Rule 4 of COMELEC Resolution No. 9366.

34. Aside from its untruthful statements in its Petition, Ang Prolife also failed to comply with election rules when it

failed to submit the required documents in support of its petition. This warrants the dismissal of this Petition.

35. A routine check of Ang Prolife's petition and its annexes would show that the Ang Prolife did not submit the following documents required under Section 7, Rule 1 and Section 1, Rule 4 of COMELEC Resolution No. 9366:

- a. Manifestation of intent to participate in the next immediately succeeding national and local elections, and the list of at least five (5) nominees.
- b. Articles of Incorporation, by-laws and Certificate of Registration issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) if registered therewith.
- c. Track record summary showing that it represents and seeks to uplift the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s it seeks to represent;
- d. Coalition agreement, if any, and the detailed list of affiliates comprising the coalition, including the coalition agreement;
- e. Sworn proof/s of existence in the areas where the organization is claiming representation; and
- f. Track record of the party-list group/organization showing active participation of the nominee/s in the undertakings of the party-list group/organization for the advancement of the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s, the sectoral party, organization, political party or coalition they seek to represent;
- g. Proofs that the nominee/s truly adheres to the advocacies of the party-list group/organizations (prior

declarations, speeches, written articles, and such other positive actions on the part of the nominee/s showing his/her adherence to the advocacies of the party-list groups/organizations);

- h. Certification that the nominee/s is/are bona-fide member of the party-list group/organization for at least ninety (90) days prior to the election; and
- i. In case of a party-list group/organization seeking representation of the marginalized and underrepresented sectors, proof that the nominee/s is not only an advocate of the party-list/organization but is/are also bona fide member/s of said marginalized and underrepresented sector.

36. This blatant omission of Ang Prolife to annex the foregoing documents in its petition is a violation / failure to comply with laws, rules or regulations relating to elections. Hence, the petition ought to be dismissed outright.

FINAL WORD

Oppositors protest Ang Prolife's party-list petition on the ground that its accreditation would make a mockery of the party-list system. Ang Prolife and its members are neither marginalized nor underrepresented. They are closely affiliated with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and the leadership of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church, which already has more social and political clout than it deserves. Together, the CBCP and so-called prolife groups hold enough power over the government that politicians routinely pander to one church at the expense of all others, and of those with no church at all. There are already numerous blatant violations of secularism, and should Ang Prolife get a seat in Congress, there is no doubt that there will be even more.

In *Ang Bagong Bayani*, the Supreme Court describes the role to the Honorable Commission when it comes to registration of party-list organizations in the following manner: *"In the end, the role of the Comelec is to see to it that only those Filipinos who are "marginalized and underrepresented" become members of Congress under the party-list system, Filipino-style."* The Oppositors ask the Honorable Commission to heed the words of the Supreme Court.

Oppositors trust that the Honorable Commission would not be so timid so as not to strike down attempts of sectarian groups masquerading as sectoral organizations to make unnecessary and prohibited inroads in what ought to be purely secular political activities. Oppositors ask that Ang Prolife's petition for registration as party-list organization be dismissed.