

QCteachers open hotline to protect poll servers

Quick Response Team also on standby to prevent harassment on May 13

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A hotline against harassment, threats and other concerns was activated on Sunday by the Quezon City Public School Teachers Association (QCPSTA) for the protection of its members who will serve in the May 13 elections.



The hotline will continue to operate until 15 days after the midterm polls, as teachers nationwide perform their traditional role of running and supervising voting precincts—a task that is not only physically taxing but also dangerous, especially in election hotspots. Five teachers will man the hotline, which is actually one landline and two mobile numbers, while a Quick Response Team composed of 20 teachers will also be on standby, QCPSTA president Kris Navales said in an interview.

“If teachers call in to say they are being harassed, we can proceed to those schools,” said Navales, who added that five vehicles were also ready for deployment throughout Quezon City.

Separate from ACT hotline

The QCPSTA election hotline numbers are 426-2238, 09155719601 and 0947-7110427.

Meant to serve around 2,000 Quezon City teachers who will serve as Board of Election Inspectors (BEI), it is separate from a national hotline managed by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

Although serving on the BEI is no longer mandatory, most teachers still jump at the opportunity, since the post comes with an honoraria that is widely viewed as a supplement to their salaries. Depending on their position, teachers receive between P5,000 and P6,000 for serving in the elections.

But poll violence remains a central concern, especially after the death of Nellie Banaag, an educator who was burned alive in Batangas province while assisting in the 2007 midterm elections.

“In Quezon City, harassment is usually the most common concern,” Navales said.

This often comes at the end of election day, after teachers prepare to transport the ballots to city hall. Supporters of some candidates who see teachers carrying the ballot boxes, not understanding where they are about to go, have tried to block or intimidate them.

“Once in the Payatas area, supporters broke down the gates, swarmed into the school and ran toward the teachers. We had to call the police,” Navales said.

The association will coordinate with the local government, Philippine National Police, Commission on Elections (Comelec) and Department of Education to address concerns brought by teachers to the hotline.

Tax-related concerns

After the launching, Navales said that most of the complaints received so far were related to the 5-percent tax that the Bureau of Internal Revenue began imposing last year on compensation received by BEI members.

Many tax-exempt teachers have yet to receive a refund more than a year later, according to ACT.

“We call upon the Comelec and other agencies to extend its support for our teachers, who will dedicate their time or risk their life just to fulfill this mandate,” Navales said.