



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

EN BANC

WIGBERTO R. TAÑADA,
JR.,

Petitioner,

G.R. Nos. 207199-200

Present:

- versus -

COMMISSION ON
ELECTIONS, ANGELINA D.
TAN, AND ALVIN JOHN S.
TAÑADA,

Respondents.

SERENO, *CJ.*,
CARPIO,
VELASCO, JR.,^{*}
LEONARDO-DE CASTRO,
BRION,
PERALTA,
BERSAMIN,^{**}
DEL CASTILLO,^{***}
ABAD,
VILLARAMA, JR.,
PEREZ,^{****}
MENDOZA,
REYES,
PERLAS-BERNABE, and
LEONEN, *JJ.*

Promulgated:

OCTOBER 22, 2013

X-----X

RESOLUTION

PERLAS-BERNABE, *J.*:

Assailed in this petition for *certiorari*¹ under Rule 65 in relation to Rule 64 of the Rules of Court is the Resolution² dated April 25, 2013 of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) *En Banc* declaring respondent Alvin John S. Tañada not a nuisance candidate.

^{*} No part.

^{**} No part.

^{***} On official leave.

^{****} On official leave.

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 5-48.

² Id. at 457-472. Signed by COMELEC Chairman Sixto S. Brillantes, Jr. and Commissioners Lucenito N. Tagle, Elias R. Yusoph, Christian Robert S. Lim, and Maria Gracia Cielo M. Padaca.

The Facts

Petitioner Wigberto R. Tañada, Jr., (Wigberto) and respondents Angelina D. Tan (Angelina) and Alvin John S. Tañada (Alvin John) were contenders for the position of Member of the House of Representatives for the 4th District of Quezon Province in the just concluded May 13, 2013 National Elections.³ Wigberto ran under the banner of the Liberal Party; Alvin John was the official congressional candidate of Lapiang Manggagawa; while Angelina was fielded by the National People's Coalition.⁴

On October 10, 2012, Wigberto filed before the COMELEC two separate petitions: first, to cancel Alvin John's CoC;⁵ and, second, to declare him as a nuisance candidate.⁶ The said petitions were docketed as SPA Nos. 13-056 (DC) and 13-057 (DC), respectively.

In a Resolution⁷ dated January 29, 2013, the COMELEC First Division dismissed both petitions for lack of merit. On Wigberto's motion for reconsideration,⁸ the COMELEC *En Banc*, in a Resolution⁹ dated April 25, 2013, upheld the COMELEC First Division's ruling in SPA No. 13-057 (DC) that Alvin John was not a nuisance candidate as defined under Section 69¹⁰ of Batas Pambansa Bilang 881, as amended, otherwise known as the "Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines" (OEC).¹¹ However, in SPA No. 13-056 (DC), it granted the motion for reconsideration and cancelled Alvin John's CoC for having committed false material representations concerning his residency in accordance with Section 78¹² of the OEC.¹³

³ See *id.* at 78-79 (Certificate of Candidacy [CoC] of Wigberto), *id.* at 80-81 (CoC of Alvin John), and *id.* at 82-83 (CoC of Angelina).

⁴ *Id.* at 11-12.

⁵ *Id.* at 479-487.

⁶ *Id.* at 527-536.

⁷ *Id.* at 446-456. Signed by Presiding Commissioner Rene V. Sarmiento and Commissioners Armando C. Velasco and Christian Robert S. Lim.

⁸ *Id.* at 642-652.

⁹ *Id.* at 457-472.

¹⁰ Section 69. *Nuisance candidates.* - The Commission may *motu proprio* or upon a verified petition of an interested party, refuse to give due course to or cancel a certificate of candidacy if it is shown that said certificate has been filed to put the election process in mockery or disrepute or to cause confusion among the voters by the similarity of the names of the registered candidates or by other circumstances or acts which clearly demonstrate that the candidate has no *bona fide* intention to run for the office for which the certificate of candidacy has been filed and thus prevent a faithful determination of the true will of the electorate.

¹¹ *Rollo*, pp. 464-466.

¹² Section 78. *Petition to deny due course to or cancel a certificate of candidacy.* - A verified petition seeking to deny due course to or cancel a certificate of candidacy may be filed by the person exclusively on the ground that any material representation contained therein as required under Section 74 hereof is false. The petition may be filed at any time not later than twenty-five days from the time of the filing of the certificate of candidacy and shall be decided, after due notice and hearing, not later than fifteen days before the election.

¹³ *Rollo*, pp. 466-471.

On May 15, 2013, Wigberto filed a 2nd Motion for Partial Reconsideration¹⁴ of the COMELEC *En Banc*'s ruling in SPA No. 13-057 (DC) on the ground of newly discovered evidence. He alleged that Alvin John's candidacy was not *bona fide* because: (a) Alvin John was merely forced by his father to file his CoC; (b) he had no election paraphernalia posted in official COMELEC posting areas in several barangays of Gumaca, Quezon Province; (c) he did not even vote during the May 13, 2013 National Elections; and (d) his legal representation appeared to have been in collusion with the lawyers of Angelina.¹⁵

On May 15 and 16, 2013, Wigberto filed with the COMELEC *En Banc* an Extremely Urgent Motion to Admit Additional and Newly Discovered Evidence and to Urgently Resolve Motion for Reconsideration¹⁶ and an Urgent Manifestation and Supplemental¹⁷ thereto. These motions, however, remained un-acted upon until the filing of the present petition before the Court on May 27, 2013. Thus, in order to avoid charges of forum-shopping, said motions were withdrawn by Wigberto.

In a related development, despite the cancellation of Alvin John's CoC due to his material misrepresentations therein, his name was not deleted from – and thus, remained printed on – the ballot, prompting Wigberto to file a motion¹⁸ with the Provincial Board of Canvassers of Quezon Province (PBOC) asking that the votes cast in the name of Alvin John be credited to him instead in accordance with the Court's ruling in *Dela Cruz v. COMELEC*¹⁹ and COMELEC Resolution No. 9599.²⁰ The PBOC, however, denied Wigberto's motion in a Resolution²¹ dated May 16, 2013, holding that the votes of Alvin John could not be counted in favor of Wigberto because the cancellation of the former's CoC was on the basis of his material misrepresentations under Section 78 of the OEC and not on being a nuisance candidate under Section 69 of the same law. Consequently, the PBOC canvassed the votes of all three contenders separately, and thereafter, on May 16, 2013, proclaimed Angelina as the winning candidate for the position of Member of the House of Representatives for the 4th District of Quezon Province.²² According to Wigberto, it was for the foregoing reason that he impleaded Angelina as a party-respondent in the instant petition for *certiorari*.²³

¹⁴ Id. at 665-669.

¹⁵ See id. at 20-22, and 33-37.

¹⁶ Id. at 689-695.

¹⁷ Id. at 708-713.

¹⁸ The said motion is not attached to the records of this case.

¹⁹ G.R. No. 192221, November 13, 2012, 685 SCRA 347.

²⁰ Entitled "IN THE MATTER OF THE AMENDMENT TO RULE 24 OF THE COMELEC RULES OF PROCEDURE, AS AMENDED BY RESOLUTION NO. 9523"; dated December 21, 2012.

²¹ See *rollo*, p. 841. The said resolution is not attached to the records of this case.

²² Id. at 9.

²³ Id. at 8.

It appears, however, that Wigberto had already filed with the COMELEC a Petition to Annul the Proclamation of Angelina (Petition to Annul) under SPC No. 13-013, asserting that had the PBOC followed pertinent rulings,²⁴ the votes cast for Alvin John would have been counted in his favor which could have resulted in his victory.²⁵ While the Petition to Annul was still pending resolution, Wigberto initiated the instant *certiorari* case against the COMELEC *En Banc* Resolution dated April 25, 2013 declaring Alvin John not a nuisance candidate.

On July 3, 2013, Wigberto filed a Manifestation²⁶ informing the Court that he had caused the filing of an Election Protest *Ad Cautelam* entitled “*Wigberto R. Tañada, Jr. v. Angelina ‘Helen’ D. Tan*,” before the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET), which was docketed as Electoral Protest Case No. 13-018.

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), on behalf of public respondent COMELEC, affirmed in its Comment dated August 18, 2013,²⁷ that an Election Protest *Ad Cautelam* had, indeed, been filed by Wigberto against Angelina before the HRET, praying that he be declared the winner in the 2013 congressional race in the 4th District of Quezon Province. It also alleged that on June 28, 2013, the COMELEC Second Division issued a Resolution annulling the proclamation of Angelina as Member of the House of Representatives for the 4th District of Quezon Province. The propriety of this ruling is now pending resolution before the COMELEC *En Banc*.²⁸

The Issues Before the Court

Wigberto assails the COMELEC *En Banc* Resolution dated April 25, 2013 declaring that Alvin John was not a nuisance candidate as defined under Section 69 of the OEC. In consequence, he seeks that the votes cast in favor of Alvin John be credited to him and, thereafter, to be declared the winning candidate for the congressional post.

The Court’s Ruling

The petition must fail.

²⁴ Referring to, *inter alia*, the rulings in *Fernandez v. Fernandez* (G.R. No. L-32675, November 3, 1970, 36 SCRA 1) and *Dela Cruz v. COMELEC* (supra note 19).

²⁵ *Rollo*, p. 9.

²⁶ Id. at 830-831.

²⁷ Id. at 836-856.

²⁸ Id. at 842.

Section 17, Article VI of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the HRET is the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns, and qualifications of its respective members:

Sec. 17. The Senate and the House of Representatives shall each have an Electoral Tribunal which shall be the **sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns, and qualifications** of their respective Members. Each Electoral Tribunal, shall be composed of nine Members, three of whom shall be Justices of the Supreme Court to be designated by the Chief Justice, and the remaining six shall be Members of the Senate or the House of Representatives, as the case may be, who shall be chosen on the basis of proportional representation from the political parties and the parties or organizations registered under the party-list system represented therein. The senior Justice in the Electoral Tribunal shall be its Chairman. (Emphasis and underscoring supplied)

Case law states that the proclamation of a congressional candidate following the election divests the COMELEC of jurisdiction over disputes relating to the election, returns, and qualifications of the proclaimed representative in favor of the HRET.²⁹ The phrase “election, returns and qualifications” refers to all matters affecting the validity of the contestee’s title.³⁰ In particular, the term “election” refers to the conduct of the polls, including the listing of voters, the holding of the electoral campaign, and the casting and counting of the votes; “returns” refers to the canvass of the returns and the proclamation of the winners, including questions concerning the composition of the board of canvassers and the authenticity of the election returns; and “qualifications” refers to matters that could be raised in a *quo warranto* proceeding against the proclaimed winner, such as his disloyalty or ineligibility or the inadequacy of his CoC.³¹

In the foregoing light, considering that Angelina had already been proclaimed as Member of the House of Representatives for the 4th District of Quezon Province on May 16, 2013, as she has in fact taken her oath and assumed office past noon time of June 30, 2013,³² the Court is now without jurisdiction to resolve the case at bar. As they stand, the issues concerning the conduct of the canvass and the resulting proclamation of Angelina as herein discussed are matters which fall under the scope of the terms “election” and “returns” as above-stated and hence, properly fall under the HRET’s sole jurisdiction.

²⁹ *Jalosjos, Jr. v. COMELEC*, G.R. Nos. 192474, 192704, and 193566, June 26, 2012, 674 SCRA 530, 534-535.


³⁰ *Vinzons-Chato v. COMELEC*, G.R. No. 172131, April 2, 2007, 520 SCRA 167, 178, citing *Rasul v. COMELEC*, 371 Phil. 760, 766 (1999).

³¹ *Id.* at 179, citing *Barbers v. COMELEC*, G.R. No. 165691, June 22, 2005, 460 SCRA 569, 582.

³² *Rollo*, pp. 807-808. See Angelina’s Manifestation (In Lieu of Comment) dated July 24, 2013.


WHEREFORE, the petition is **DISMISSED**.

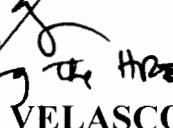
SO ORDERED.


ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE
 Associate Justice


WE CONCUR:

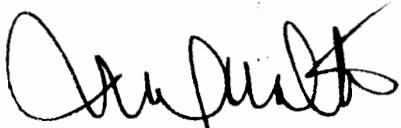

MARIA LOURDES P. A. SERENO
 Chief Justice

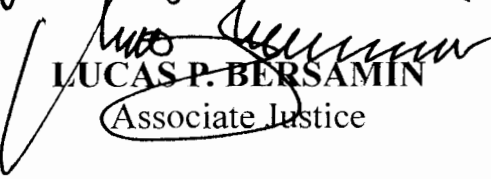

ANTONIO T. CARPIO
 Associate Justice

(no part being the HRET chairman)

PRESBITERO J. VELASCO, JR.
 Associate Justice

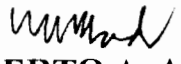
Teresita Leonardo de Castro
TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
 Associate Justice


ARTURO D. BRION
 Associate Justice


DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
 Associate Justice

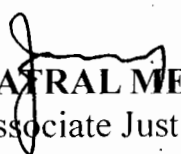
No part being a member of the HRET

LUCAS P. BERSAMIN
 Associate Justice

On Official Leave
MARIANO C. DEL CASTILLO
 Associate Justice


ROBERTO A. ABAD
 Associate Justice


MARTIN S. VILLARAMA, JR.
 Associate Justice

On Official Leave
JOSE PORTUGAL PEREZ
 Associate Justice


JOSE CATRAL MENDOZA
 Associate Justice


BIENVENIDO L. REYES
 Associate Justice


MARVIC MARIO VICTOR F. LEONEN
 Associate Justice

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the conclusions in the above Resolution had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court.



MARIA LOURDES P. A. SERENO
Chief Justice