

Title: Uy Jr. vs. Commission on Elections and Jalosjos Jr.

Facts:

This case arose from the 2022 elections for Zamboanga del Norte's first district representative, involving four candidates: Roberto "Pinpin" T. Uy, Jr., Romeo "Kuya Jonjon" M. Jalosjos, Jr., Frederico "Kuya Jan" P. Jalosjos, and Richard Amazon. Romeo M. Jalosjos, Jr., filed a Verified Petition before the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to declare Frederico P. Jalosjos a nuisance candidate and cancel his Certificate of Candidacy (CoC), alleging Frederico had no bona fide intention to run for public office and aimed to cause voter confusion due to a similarity in names and nicknames. The COMELEC Second Division granted the petition on April 19, 2022. Frederico sought reconsideration, but the elections proceeded, resulting in Roberto leading in votes, followed by Romeo, Frederico, and Amazon. COMELEC, on motion by Romeo, directed the Provincial Board of Canvassers (PBOC) to suspend Roberto's proclamation. Despite challenges over the validity and formality of the order, the COMELEC En Banc eventually suspended Roberto's proclamation and, in a later resolution, affirmed Frederico's declaration as a nuisance candidate, ordering that his votes be credited to Romeo, who was then proclaimed the winner. Both Roberto and Frederico filed petitions before the Supreme Court challenging the COMELEC's decisions.

Issues:

1. Whether the COMELEC has authority under the law to suspend the proclamation of a winning candidate in connection with a proceeding to declare another candidate a nuisance.
2. Whether the COMELEC committed grave abuse of discretion in affirming the declaration of Frederico as a nuisance candidate and in suspending Roberto's proclamation.
3. Whether votes for a declared nuisance candidate should be credited to another candidate with a similar surname.
4. Whether the jurisdiction over the case lies with the Supreme Court or the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET).

Court's Decision:

The Philippine Supreme Court found that the COMELEC gravely abused its discretion in suspending Roberto T. Uy, Jr.'s proclamation based on proceedings where he was not a party, violating his right to due process. Additionally, the Court held that the COMELEC erred in its declaration of Frederico P. Jalosjos as a nuisance candidate, noting that his bona fide intention to run for public office was substantiated by his legitimate political affiliations and campaign activities. The Supreme Court ruled that jurisdiction over the case remained with the Court, as the questions raised involved the propriety of actions taken by the

COMELEC before the proclamation of a candidate. The Supreme Court directed the COMELEC to proclaim Roberto T. Uy, Jr. as the winner.

**Doctrine:**

- The Supreme Court has jurisdiction to review decisions and orders of the COMELEC involving grave abuse of discretion, even after the proclamation of a winning candidate.
- The suspension of a winning candidate's proclamation requires strong evidence and adherence to due process, especially when such candidate is not a party to the proceeding that led to the suspension.
- A candidate's declaration as a nuisance based solely on surname similarity and without substantial evidence of intent to cause election confusion constitutes grave abuse of discretion.
- Votes for a candidate, whose CoC was improperly cancelled, cannot be arbitrarily credited to another candidate; such an action requires clear legislative authorization and compliance with due process.

**Class Notes:**

1. Jurisdiction of Supreme Court over COMELEC Decisions: The Philippine Supreme Court has the authority to review final orders, rulings, and decisions of the COMELEC En Banc in the exercise of its adjudicatory or quasi-judicial powers, involving allegations of grave abuse of discretion.
2. Suspension of Proclamation: The COMELEC cannot suspend the proclamation of a winning candidate without providing due process and based on strong evidence, particularly when the winning candidate was not a party to the proceedings leading to the suspension order.
3. Nuisance Candidate Declaration: The criteria for declaring a candidate a nuisance include intent to mock the election process or cause voter confusion through similarity in names; however, substantial proof and consideration of bona fide intent to run for office are required.
4. Crediting Votes of Nuisance Candidates: The automatic crediting of votes from a declared nuisance candidate to another candidate without clear legislative authorization and due process is improper.

**Historical Background:**

The case highlights the complexities and legal challenges in the Philippine electoral process,

particularly regarding nuisance candidates, candidate proclamation, and the jurisdictional boundaries between the COMELEC and the judiciary. It underscores the importance of safeguarding candidates' rights to due process and the need for clear guidelines on handling votes for declared nuisance candidates, elucidating the role of the Supreme Court in resolving electoral controversies.