Title:

Cordillera Regional Assembly Member Alexander P. Ordillo vs. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC), et al.

Facts:

1. **Plebiscite and RA No. 6766**: On January 30, 1990, a plebiscite was conducted under Republic Act No. 6766, entitled "An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Cordillera Autonomous Region."

2. **Results**: The plebiscite showed that only the Province of Ifugao approved the creation of the Cordillera Autonomous Region by a majority of 5,889 votes, while the other provinces—Benguet, Mountain Province, Abra, Kalinga Apayao, and Baguio City—overwhelmingly rejected it by 148,676 votes.

3. **COMELEC Resolution No. 2259**: On February 14, 1990, COMELEC issued Resolution No. 2259, declaring that the Organic Act was approved only by the Province of Ifugao.

4. **Secretary of Justice's Memorandum**: The same day, the Secretary of Justice affirmed the resolution, stating that Ifugao alone constitutes the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

5. **Republic Act No. 6861**: Congress subsequently enacted Republic Act No. 6861, setting the elections in the Cordillera Autonomous Region of Ifugao for March 1991.

6. **Executive Actions**: The Executive Secretary issued a Memorandum on February 5, 1990, to wind up the affairs of the Cordillera Executive Board (CEB) and the Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA). On March 30, 1990, President issued Administrative Order No. 160, abolishing the CEB and CRA.

7. **Petition with COMELEC**: Petitioners, comprised of various officials and residents of Ifugao, filed a petition with COMELEC on March 9, 1990, to declare the non-ratification of the Organic Act but it was merely noted by the Commission.

8. **Supreme Court Petition**: The petitioners asked the Supreme Court to declare the abovementioned resolutions, memoranda, and acts null and void and to prohibit respondents from implementing them or spending public funds for those purposes. They also sought for Executive Order No. 220, which created the CEB and CRA, to remain in force until a new organic law for the Cordillera Autonomous Region is enacted and ratified.

Issues:

1. **Constitutional Validity**: Whether the Province of Ifugao alone can legally and validly constitute the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

2. **Interpretation of "Region"**: Does the term "region" as used in Article X, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution require more than one constituent unit?

Court's Decision:

1. **Constitutional Requirement of Multiple Units**:
– The Supreme Court emphasized that under Article X, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution, a region should consist of multiple provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common historical and cultural heritage.
– The term "region" implies a grouping of more than one constituent unit, corroborated by historical administrative divisions within the Philippines.

2. **Statutory Requirements**:
– Under Republic Act No. 6766, the Cordillera Autonomous Region's administration involves multiple provinces and cities. Particular references in the Act, such as Sections addressing regional governance, planning, and development, further support that a single province cannot constitute a region.

3. **Impracticality and Absurdity**:
– It would be impractical and illogical for Ifugao, among the smallest provinces in population, to have dual sets of officials—provincial and regional—exercising governance over the same small jurisdiction.
– The Court noted various structural provisions in Republic Act No. 6766 that presuppose governance over multiple constituent units, reinforcing that one province alone cannot fulfill these requirements.

4. **Reiteration of Prior Case Law**:
– Citing the Abbas case, which dealt with plebiscites for regional autonomy, the Court clarified that it did not address whether a single constituent unit could form an autonomous region.

5. **Declaration**:
– The Court declared null and void COMELEC Resolution No. 2259, the Secretary of Justice's Memorandum, the Executive Secretary's Memorandum, Administrative Order No. 160, and Republic Act No. 6861.
– Executive Order No. 220 was upheld, pending proper repeal or amendment.

Doctrine:
– **Numerosity in Regional Composition**: Autonomous regions as discussed under Article X, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution must comprise multiple provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas. A single province cannot alone constitute a region.

Class Notes:
– **Key Elements**:
1. **Definition of Region**: Requires multiple constituent units.
2. **Constitutional Interpretation**: Words in the Constitution are given their ordinary meaning unless context suggests otherwise.
3. **Practical Implications**: Governance structures must fit intended administrative and legislative frameworks.

– **Statutory Provisions**: Republic Act No. 6766 – The Cordillera Autonomous Region must include multiple administrative units, and governance involves intricate structures unsuitable for a single-province setup.

– **Simplification for Memorization**:
– **Region Composition**: Multiple units (provinces, cities).
– **Impracticality of Single Province Region**: Overlapping governance, inefficiencies, and impracticality.
– **Constitution Article X, Section 15**: Definitions and necessity for multi-unit regions.

Historical Background:
– **Context of the Case**:
– Post-EDSA Revolution 1987 Constitution allowed for the creation of autonomous regions in the Cordillera and Muslim Mindanao to address distinct cultural, economic, and social differences.
– The legislative attempt to create an autonomous region in the Cordillera followed historical marginalization and aimed to validate regional identity. However, regional cohesion was challenged by varied political and social resolutions across constituent areas. This case underscores the challenge of balancing constitutional mandates with the practical socio-political reality of regional autonomous governance.