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DENR launches drive to cut campaign trash in May 2010 polls

Greening their campaign strategies and activities should be top agenda for those seeking elective offices this coming May 2010 elections, according to newly appointed Environment Secretary Horacio C. Ramos.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through its National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSMC) secretariat has officially launched its *Basura-Free Election 2010*, with theme “*Kalat Ko, Linis Ko*” campaign, which encourages all local chief executives, political parties and candidates to the May polls reduce the campaign trash.

Official campaign period for national positions and party-list groups commenced last February 9. Campaign activities for local positions will start on March 5.

Together with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the DENR has likewise signed and issued a joint circular on the implementation of the program for the duration of the campaign and election period.

Assistant Secretary for Local Government Concerns and Lands, and NSWMC Executive Director Gerardo V. Calderon said they are closely coordinating with candidates, both for national and local elective posts to “ensure their commitment and compliance to the guidelines we have set forth for the proper management of their waste campaign materials.”

The *Basura-Free Election* program promotes a “zero-waste” election through the implementation of waste reduction, segregation and proper disposal of waste generated during the campaign and election period.

“This is as simple as cleaning up whatever election materials like posters, streamers, banners, stickers and flyers which they have placed in public places, including parks and streets.”

The joint memorandum circular has put forward some guidelines that can help candidates, political parties and party-list groups campaign in environmentally-responsible ways:

- Adherence to a litter-free campaign;
- Observance of waste segregation during campaign meetings and other related activities;
- Proper coordination with the local waste collector to gather segregated waste for composting, recycling or for proper disposal;
- Cleaning up the surroundings after each activity;
- Getting on with the campaign without damaging any trees;
- Avoidance from using excessive packaging of goods and single use containers; and
- Disposal of election campaign materials immediately after the elections day.

According to Calderon, any local official, political party or candidate to the May 2010 elections, who willfully or through negligence, fails to observe the provisions of this Joint Memorandum Circular shall be subject to the sanctions provided under the Local Government Code, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and under such other applicable laws.