

WARASIT APICHATCHOTE : COMPULSORY VOTING : CONCEPT AND CONSEQUENCES.
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Election is the most important process in the democratic system. Election in each country is now based on either the right to vote theory or the duty to vote theory.

The duty theory or the compulsory voting is based on the presumption that Sovereignty belongs to the Nation and not the People. However, not all countries believing in this theory compel their people to vote because such belief is deemed purely theoretical. The real reasons behind compulsory voting are the voters' disinterest in voting, need for more public participation in voting, need for more practical political education to the people and need for public devotion to the national political activity.

Compulsory voting can be imposed in the Constitution or in the election law and can be used in some kinds of elections or even in some specific areas. Furthermore, some supportive measures other than legal measures may be introduced for the convenience of the voters. With respect to the legal sanctions, punishments for the violators can be imposed but only trivial ones are applied such as fine, warning, and social or political sanctions. It should also be noted that compulsory voting in some countries are adopted together with the proportional system of election.

Researches in some countries such as Australia reveal that after compulsory voting is applicable, more spoiled voting ballots are found, while the turn out rate of voters is increasing. It is therefore understood that compulsory voting is successful only in compelling the voters to register or to show up to vote and not in compelling the voters to vote willingly, rightly or consciously.