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SEC Pushes Bold 2025 Reforms: Faster Approvals, Digital Registration, and Lower Capital Market Costs

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MANILA, PHILIPPINES, November 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has rolled out its boldest wave of reforms in recent years, issuing a trio of policy measures designed to cut red tape, accelerate corporate filings, and make the Philippines a more attractive hub for foreign and local investment through streamlining business incorporation and corporate services. Through Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 07, Series of 2025; MC No. 09, Series of 2025; and the launch of its new Zuper Easy Registration Online (ZERO) platform, the SEC is seeking to redefine the country's business environment with a digital-first, investor-friendly approach.
"These reforms are not isolated initiatives. They are part of a systemic effort to align our processes with global best practices and to ensure that investors—whether local or foreign—find in the Philippines a place where business can thrive," SEC Chairperson Emilio B. Aquino said in a statement.

Faster Securities Registration and Lower Fees
Among the most transformative reforms is Memorandum Circular No. 09, Series of 2025, issued in July. The circular streamlines the registration process for securities offerings—including initial public offerings (IPOs), bond issuances, and follow-on offerings—by imposing a strict forty-five day deadline for the SEC to act on applications. The countdown begins once the applicant submits proof of payment of twenty percent of the registration fees, eliminating the previous

ambiguity that often delayed processing.
In addition to faster processing, the SEC has also introduced a thirty percent discount on registration fees, available until December 31, 2025. The measure is intended to ease the financial burden on issuers and encourage more companies to raise funds in the Philippine capital market. Market experts believe the initiative will spur a new wave of IPOs and bond listings, as the combination of predictable timelines and lower costs reduces barriers to entry for both local firms and foreign subsidiaries seeking to raise capital.
The SEC emphasized that the reform directly addresses one of the biggest complaints of issuers: regulatory uncertainty. By providing clear timelines and financial incentives, the Commission aims to make the Philippines more competitive with regional peers like Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia, where faster capital market approvals have long been standard.

Mandatory Digital Registration Through ZERO
In April 2025, the SEC unveiled the Zuper Easy Registration Online, or ZERO system, which marks a complete shift to digital incorporation for domestic stock corporations, which are the closest local equivalent of limited liability companies abroad. Under the new policy, all applications for company registration must be processed through ZERO, which integrates the Commission's existing portals—eSPARC (Electronic Simplified Processing of Application for Registration of Companies) and OneSEC (One-Day Submission and E-Registration of Companies)—into a single streamlined system.
Through ZERO, incorporators no longer need to submit notarized hard copies of Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, or other foundational documents. Instead, all filings can be authenticated digitally via the SEC's Electronic Submission Authentication Portal, which uses secure one-time passwords. The digitally issued certificates of incorporation carry the same legal weight as traditional paper documents, ensuring legal certainty for businesses while eliminating costly and time-consuming notarization and courier requirements.
The SEC clarified that the mandatory use of ZERO applies immediately to domestic stock corporations, including those with foreign equity. Other corporate types, such as lending companies, financing companies, and foreign corporations, have been given a three-month transition period before full compliance is required. A technical support desk has also been established to assist incorporators in navigating the new platform, from account creation to authentication.
Chairperson Aquino said the intent is clear: "We want to eliminate friction in doing business in the Philippines. With ZERO, investors no longer have to deal with lines, couriers, or notarization. The whole process is faster, cheaper, and global." The reform, he added, aligns with the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 and the Electronic Commerce Act of 2000, both of which call on government agencies to simplify processes and embrace digital platforms.
For foreign investors, the benefits are particularly significant. The system allows multinational corporations and entrepreneurs abroad to establish Philippine subsidiaries without physically coming to the country, a shift that dramatically reduces both cost and time. Business groups such as the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines hailed the reform as a "game changer," noting that investors can now launch operations in days instead of months.

Strict Timelines and Deemed Approved Applications

Another key measure, Memorandum Circular No. 07, Series of 2025, was issued in March to further institutionalize efficiency and accountability within the Commission. The circular introduces strict timelines for processing corporate applications, registrations, and licenses. More importantly, it provides that if the SEC fails to act within the prescribed period, the application will be considered "deemed approved."

The measure directly implements the provisions of Republic Act No. 11032, the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, which requires government agencies to set definitive processing times and ensure that delays are minimized. Aquino underscored the importance of the reform, saying: "This is about certainty and speed. By setting definitive timelines, we are removing bureaucratic bottlenecks that once discouraged investors. We want foreign and local enterprises alike to feel confident that the Philippines is serious about being an investment hub."

For foreign-owned corporations, the policy offers a new level of predictability. Previously, the lack of clear timelines often left applications in limbo, frustrating investors and delaying business operations. The "deemed approved" mechanism addresses this concern by ensuring that silence from the regulator no longer equates to uncertainty, but rather to progress.

Towards a Digital-First, Investor-Friendly Philippines

The cumulative impact of these reforms is a Philippine business environment that is faster, cheaper, and more predictable. By reducing fees for securities registration, eliminating paperwork through ZERO, and guaranteeing strict processing timelines, the SEC has sought to position the country as a competitive destination for investment in Southeast Asia.

Business chambers have broadly welcomed the reforms. The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines noted that the measures demonstrate the government's seriousness in attracting long-term foreign capital. The Philippine Stock Exchange has also projected an increase in IPO activity in the latter half of 2025, citing renewed investor confidence spurred by regulatory efficiency.

Beyond the immediate reforms, the SEC has committed to further digital transformation. Upcoming initiatives include the rollout of eSECURE, a digital identification system for corporate officers, and expanded use of the eSAP authentication platform for paperless transactions. The Commission is also working to align its processes with ASEAN standards, particularly under the ASEAN Capital Market Forum, to support cross-border fundraising.

"This is not just about forms and fees," Aquino emphasized. "It's about building trust. We want the global investment community to know that the Philippines is open for business, and that the rules are fair, fast, and digital."

As the reforms take root, analysts say the real test will be in consistent implementation. But for now, the message from the SEC is clear: the Philippines is embracing a digital-first, investor-friendly future, and the barriers that once hampered business growth are steadily being dismantled.

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