

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC
OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session



Senate
Office of the Secretary

'13 JUL 24 P 4 :20

SENATE
S. B. 1092

REC'D BY: *ja*

Introduced by Senator Poe

Explanatory Note

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

- Leonardo da Vinci


This bill is patterned after one of the newest but most effective laws of the United States, Public Law 111-274 (October 13, 2010). And as it is being introduced in this legislation, Plain Writing Act calls for the use of simple, concise, easily understandable words and phrases in all government documents. The intention is to avoid jargon, redundancy, ambiguity and obscurity. This is to help also the citizens in availing government services.

In the United States where it was enacted in 2010, remarkable benefits have been monitored¹:

1. There is a marked improvement in the public understanding of government communications and requirements;
2. It saves money and increases efficiency;
3. It reduces the need for public clarification and reduces resources spent for enforcement;
4. It simplifies government forms and applications; and
5. It reduces the number of errors and the time and effort required to fix them.

Plain Writing system in public service can be an efficient tool in public administration in the Philippines. It may shorten transactions in most government offices, it can lessen too bureaucratic red tapes, it can streamline administrative procedures, among others.

With the sage advise of a wise man that "the chief virtue that language can have is clearness and nothing detracts from it so much as the use of unfamiliar words,"² the early approval of the Plain Writing in Philippine Public Service Act is earnestly requested.


GRACE POE

¹ US Food and Drug Administration, www.fda.gov

² Greek Philosopher Hippocrates



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**AN ACT
TO ENHANCE CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND
SERVICES BY ESTABLISHING A SYSTEM IN WHICH GOVERNMENT
DOCUMENTS ISSUED TO THE PUBLIC MUST BE WRITTEN CLEARLY,
ORDAINING FOR THE PURPOSE A PLAIN WRITING FOR PHILIPPINE PUBLIC
SERVICE ACT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress of the Philippines
assembled:*

SECTION 1. Short Title. This Act shall be cited as the "Plain Writing for Public Service Act of 2013"

SEC. 2. Objective. The purpose of this Act is to improve the effectiveness and accountability of government agencies to the public by promoting clear government communication that the citizens can understand and use.

SEC. 3. Plain Writing in Public Service. All government agencies are hereby mandated to adopt Plain Writing in all their communications and in the implementation of their basic functions, mandates and services.

"Plain Writing" shall refer to writing and preparations thereof that are clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience or constituents. Plain writing shall be used in the following documents but not limited to:

- 3.1. information about any government benefit or services;
- 3.2. documents necessary for obtaining any government benefit or service or filing taxes;
- 3.3. documents that explain to the public how to comply with a requirement the government agencies administer, enforce and provide;

Plain writing shall also cover letters, forms, instructions, notices and publications.

The term "government agencies" as used in this Act shall mean all government departments, bureaus, divisions, attached agencies and government owned- and controlled- corporations

SEC. 4. The Civil Service Commission. The Civil Service Commission shall be the main agency tasked to oversee the implementation of this Act. Initially, sixty (60) days after the approval of this Act, the CSC shall issue a guideline detailing the following:

A. Preparation for Implementation of Plain Writing Requirements.

1. All government agencies must designate one (1) or more senior officials within the agency to be the point-person for the implementation of this Act;
2. Communicate the requirements of this Act to the employees of the agency;
3. Train employees of government agencies in Plain Writing;
4. Establish a process for overseeing the compliance of the agencies with the requirements of this Act.

B. Websites. All government agencies are mandated to adopt a system of Plain Writing in their websites or relevant portals.

The CSC shall create a Section on Plain Writing which shall develop and issue guidance or guidelines in implementing the requirements of this Act. The said Section shall be allowed to consult and partner with a relevant academic institution and/or organization in the development and issuance of relevant guidance or guidelines.

The CSC shall in consultation with other government offices and relevant organizations shall issue the implementing rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 5. All government agencies are mandated to report and publish in their respective websites or publications a report on their agency's compliance with the requirements of this Act.

SEC. 6. The amount of ten million pesos (Php 10,000,000.00) is appropriated initially for the Plain Writing Section of the Civil Service Commission. Every year, the CSC shall be allotted the needed appropriation to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,