

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



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SENATE
S. No. 1766

RECEIVED BY: *js*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Sections 24 and 28 provides that:

SEC. 24. The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.

SEC. 28. Subject to reasonable conditions prescribed by law, the State adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest.

Government communications is an essential aspect of a strong democracy. Firstly, it makes for a solid bureaucracy by ensuring prompt and faithful transmission of information from one office to another. In doing so, the government will be able to coordinate its activities properly by allowing its agencies to act upon correct information in a timely manner. Good communication will prevent the inefficiencies and make government activities more effective.

Secondly, it allows for better transparency in government communication. If the communications are easily understood, regulatory offices and non-government watch groups will be able to follow the information and participate promptly and more effectively.

In using plain language, we will be able to communicate information to a broader range of recipients in terms of comprehension levels. We will be able to reach out to more people inside and outside the government.

This bill seeks to enjoin government agencies to use plain language in communications by mandating Civil Service Commission to provide the guidelines to all government officials and employees.*

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
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* This bill was originally filed in the Fourteenth Congress, Second Regular Session.



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AN ACT

TO ENHANCE CITIZEN ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES
BY ESTABLISHING THAT GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS ISSUED TO THE PUBLIC
MUST BE WRITTEN CLEARLY AND IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Plain Language Act.”

SECTION 2. *Definitions.* – The purposes of this Act the term –

(A) AGENCY - means all government agencies and instrumentalities, and local government offices, government-owned corporations and local government units;

(B) COVERED DOCUMENT - means any document issued by an agency to the public, including documents and other text released in electronic form; and

(C) PLAIN LANGUAGE - means language that the intended audience can readily understand and use because that language is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices of plain language writing.

SECTION 3. *Purpose.* – The purpose of this Act is to improve the effectiveness and accountability of government agencies to the public by promoting clear communications that the public can understand and use.

SECTION 4. *Requirement.* – Not later than one (1) year after the date of effectivity of this Act, each agency shall use plain language in any covered document of the agency issued or substantially revised.

1 SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Guidelines.* – The Civil Service Commission shall
2 promulgate the implementing rules for this law not later than six (6) months after the date of
3 effectivity of this Act. Such rule shall contain a provision for the development of a plain
4 language manual to be used as guidelines in the implementation of this Act.

5 SECTION 6. *Report.* - Not later than one year after the date of effectivity of this Act, the
6 head of each agency shall submit to the appropriate in the Senate and the House of
7 Representatives a report that describes how the agency intends to meet the following objectives:

8 (A) Communicating the requirements of this Act to agency employees.

9 (B) Training agency employees to write in plain language.

10 (C) Meeting the requirement under Section 4.

11 (D) Designating a senior official to be responsible for implementing the requirements
12 of this Act.

13 (E) Using, to the extent practicable and appropriate, plain language in regulations
14 promulgated by the agency.

15 SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* – Such sum as may be necessary for the full
16 implementation of this Act is hereby appropriated.

17 SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
18 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
19 valid and subsisting.

20 SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
21 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent
22 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

23 SECTION 10. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
24 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,