


14 MAY 19 P3:34

SENATE

S. No. 2232

RECEIVED BY 

Introduced by Senator Ralph G. Recto

AN ACT
PROVIDING FREE PUBLIC WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PARKS, AND NATIONAL ROADS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Explanatory Note

The National Capital Region (NCR) has been ranked the 2nd best outsourcing destination in the world after Bangalore, India.¹ The Information Technology-Business Process Outsourcing (IT-BPO) sector remains vibrant and progressive, signaling the importance of the Internet in the Philippine capital and the economy.

However, wireless internet connection is difficult to locate and acquire. Of the ten Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member-states, the Philippines' Internet Speed for 2014 of 3.6 mbps, in contrast to Singapore's 61.0 mbps, ranks lowest in the ASEAN.² This is a clear reflection of the low priority given to broadband internet infrastructure in the country.

Despite having a Philippine Digital Strategy (PDS) 2011 – 2016, the establishment of a broadband internet infrastructure policy for the Philippines, which could mean internet for all, seems to have been pushed back with regard to importance.

In line with the goal of the PDS to establish a Universal Access and Service Fund (UASF), a financing instrument that can be sourced from the Spectrum User Fees (SUF) of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), this bill proposes that the sums necessary to implement the broadband infrastructure shall be automatically appropriated out of the SUF of NTC. The SUF accounts for a significant amount of the agency's revenue and reverts to the National Treasury.

This bill recognizes the vital role of communication and information in national development and thus, provides for free public wireless internet access in public buildings, parks, and national roads in NCR.

Similar to the relevance of roads and bridges in stimulating economic activity and in fueling the Philippine economy, so too is the effect of a broadband infrastructure. Connectivity to the internet will enhance business growth opportunities and will assure citizens in NCR ease of sourcing timely information at the click of a button.

For the Philippines to further establish itself as an emerging economy, a public broadband internet infrastructure must be in place beginning with NCR. Providing free internet access to public buildings and facilities in the national capital will also ensure that our growing labor force

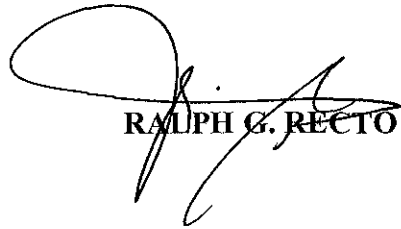
¹ 2014 Tholons Top 100 Outsourcing Destinations: Regional Overview

² ASEAN DNA ASEAN Average Internet Speed Index 2014

will be updated with employment opportunities. Free wireless internet connection will ensure that the populace—beginning in the capital—will be equipped with and honed to using key faculties needed to build an innovative, progressive, and rapidly digitizing economy.

Allowing free wireless internet access in key public places in NCR means providing access to the underserved in our society, including getting low-income people online. Connectivity must be provided to residents and visitors of the capital, providing them access to critical information anytime—from educational information for students in our public schools, traffic situations and alternative routes for motorists plying the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) and other national highways, latest weather advisories disseminated through social media, prime commodity price fluctuations such as that of oil and gas, updates on government services such as issuances of documents, to transparency initiatives of the government.

In light of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.




RALPH G. RECTO

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Free Metro Manila WiFi Act
2 of 2014”.

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy and Objectives.** – The State shall give priority to science
4 and technology to accelerate social progress and promote human development. The State shall
5 encourage the participation of private groups, local governments, and community-based
6 organizations in the generation and utilization of science and technology for national
7 development.

8 In recognition of the vital role of communication and information in nation-building, the
9 State shall stimulate a policy environment for the development of communication structures
10 suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation. The State shall also stimulate a flow of
11 information into, out of, and across the country.

12 As such, it shall provide a broadband internet infrastructure that shall be established for
13 the benefit of individuals beginning in the Nation Capital Region (NCR).

14 **SEC. 3. Wireless Internet Connection in Select Areas in the NCR.** – The government
15 shall provide public buildings, parks, and national roads in NCR with broadband hotspots that
16 will offer a stable internet connection, thereby encouraging discourse and trade in internet-
17 related goods, services, and content.

18 Areas that will be provided with broadband hotspots in NCR shall include, but not
19 limited to the following:

- 20 A. All national and local government offices;
21 B. Public health centers and hospitals;
22 C. Public Elementary and High Schools, and State Colleges and Universities;
23 D. Public Parks;
24 E. Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Terminals I, II, III, and IV);

- 25 F. Public Libraries;
- 26 G. Tollways and Expressways (North Luzon Expressway, South Luzon Expressway,
- 27 Metro Manila Skyway, and Manila-Cavite Expressway);
- 28 H. Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) and other national roads;
- 29 I. Public transport terminals;
- 30 J. Port of Manila; and
- 31 K. Rail Transit Stations (LRT Line 1, MRT Line 2, MRT Line 3, and PNR Southrail).

32 **SEC. 4. *Access to Wireless Internet Connection.*** – Within a period of two (2) years, all

33 public spaces and national roads in NCR as stipulated in this Act shall be ensured a range of

34 broadband hotspots. Internet connection to any of the broadband hotspots in the designated

35 public spaces shall not be restricted with passwords. No fees shall be collected for users to

36 connect to the internet using the public broadband hotspots.

37 **SEC. 5. *Internet Service Provider.*** – The Information and Communications Technology

38 Office (ICTO) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is the lead agency for the

39 promotion and implementation of the government’s Information and Communications

40 Technology (ICT) - related efforts. Priorities of ICTO include ICT Policy Formulation and

41 Industry Development, Cybersecurity, and providing internet for all. As such, it shall provide the

42 internet connectivity infrastructure required for a mesh of networks to cover public spaces in

43 NCR that will be provided with broadband hotspots. These hotspots will be made available using

44 initially the services of existing commercial internet service providers (ISPs) until such time that

45 a national broadband system has been installed.

46 The National Computer Center (NCC) shall monitor the progress of the implementation

47 of a broadband infrastructure and its maintenance.

48 **SEC. 6. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the immediate implementation of

49 the provisions of this Act shall be charged against any available funds of the National

50 Telecommunication Commission (NTC) and/or over all savings under the current General

51 Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary to implement the broadband

52 infrastructure shall be automatically appropriated out of the Spectrum User Fees (SUF) of NTC.

53 Any deficiency in the budgetary requirements for the implementation of this Act shall be

54 included in the General Appropriations Act.

55 **SEC. 7. *Separability Clause.*** – In the event that any provision of this Act is declared

56 unconstitutional, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected by such declaration.

57 **SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or portions

58 thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

59 **SEC. 9. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication

60 in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation or the *Official Gazette*.

Approved,