



'15 MAY -6 P4 38

SENATE
P. S. R. No. 1316

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORT THAT THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION IN PANGASINAN LACKS EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO THE INCREASING NUMBER OF FOREST FIRES IN THEIR TOWNS

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 16 provides: "The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature";

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 9514, also known as the "Fire Code of the Philippines of 2008", Section 2 states that: "It is the policy of the State to ensure public safety and promote economic development through the prevention and suppression of all kinds of destructive fires...";

WHEREAS, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* on 21 April 2015 reported that the Bureau of Fire Protection in Pangasinan are helpless in responding to forest fires;

WHEREAS, aside from inadequate firefighting equipment and access to areas where fires are raging, the local environment office also allegedly lacked personnel to supervise the forests;

WHEREAS, forest fires had been almost a yearly occurrence in the last six years in the mountainous areas of Pangasinan and each incident had reportedly exposed the helplessness of the Bureau of Fire Protection to contain these;

WHEREAS, when a forest fire broke out in the mountains of Aguilar town in Pangasinan province during Holy Week, all that town fire chief Arturo Orduña could allegedly do was to watch it from the lowlands and get ready in case it spreads down to residential areas at the foot of the mountains;

WHEREAS, during a forest fire at the Caraballo mountains in Natividad town on Black Saturday, local fire chief Randy Fabros alleged that he can only bring the town's lone fire truck

1 to the Sky Plaza, a park on top of a hill, and prevented the park's buildings and other structures
2 from being burned;

3 WHEREAS, councilor Rosendo Fernandez alleged that during the Holy Week, at least
4 300 hectares of forest near the mountain village of Mapita in Aguilar burned for three days;

5 WHEREAS, according to Orduña, because the area was too high, they just waited for the
6 fire to reach the lower parts of the mountains where they can bring the firetruck;

7 WHEREAS, during the hearing fire chief Orduña reportedly said that they were totally
8 helpless;

9 WHEREAS, records of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office
10 (PENRO) reportedly showed that seven forest fires this year had burned about 208 hectares of
11 forest in the towns of Bugallon, Natividad, and San Quintin;

12 WHEREAS, according to PENRO chief Leduina Co, there were 53 incidents of forest
13 fires which destroyed 2,821 hectares of forest worth ₱23.23 million from 2009 until April 2015;

14 WHEREAS, Pangasinan reportedly has 134,418 hectares of forest land in 22 of its 48
15 towns and cities;

16 WHEREAS, Natividad police chief Senior Inspector Ariel Caballero reportedly said the
17 fire that razed part of the Caraballo mountains started from a grassy compound in Barangay
18 Batchelor East, but that they still do not know if it was intentional or accidental;

19 WHEREAS, Orduña allegedly said that the fire in the Aguilar mountains was intentional
20 because it had been the practice of slash-and-burn farmers to burn the old patches of grass to
21 allow regrowth;

22 WHEREAS, Board Member Mojamito Libunao reportedly said that the problem on forest
23 fires was beyond the capability of PENRO and local officials to address;

24 WHEREAS, Congress, through relevant legislation, should ensure the provision of
25 adequate manpower and equipment for the fire service, and establish effective public information
26 campaigns in the rural communities prone to forest fires;

27 WHEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE PHILIPPINE SENATE to direct
28 the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the report that the

- 1 Bureau of Fire Protection in Pangasinan lacks equipment and personnel to effectively respond to
- 2 the increasing number of forest fires in their towns.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
JP

/lml