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SENATE
S.B. No. 1533

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(In Substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 1183, 1324 and 1356)

Prepared Jointly by the Committees on Science and Technology , Ways and Means and
Finance with Senators Aquino IV, Poe and Ejercito and as authors thereof

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE BALIK SCIENTIST PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSE

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

- 1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Balik Scientist Act.*”
- 2 **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** – The State recognizes that the utilization of the expertise of
3 expatriate Filipino scientists and technologists is a vital component of the nation's political,
4 economic and social development efforts. Hence, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 encourage Filipino scientists and technology experts from abroad to return to the Philippines
6 and share their expertise to accelerate the development of the country.
- 7 Towards this end, any foreign-based scientist, professional, technician, or any person with
8 special skills or expertise, who is of Filipino descent, shall be allowed to share his or her
9 profession or expertise in the Philippines in accordance with the implementing rules and
10 regulations which shall be promulgated by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST)
11 in consultation with relevant agencies of the government and non-government organizations.
- 12 **SECTION 3. General Objectives.** – This Act aims to strengthen the scientific and technological
13 human resources of the academe, public institutions and domestic corporations in order to
14 promote knowledge sharing and accelerate the flow of new technologies into the country.
15
- 16 Towards this end, DOST shall award short, medium, and long term engagements to Balik
17 Scientists, and ensure their participation in the mentorship activities, training, lecture, and
18 other similar activities in any institution, subject to the agreement between the Balik Scientist,
19 the host institution, as approved by the DOST.
- 20 **SECTION 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:
- 21 (a) Balik Scientist – a science & technology expert or professional, as certified by the DOST,
22 who is currently or who was formerly a Filipino citizen or a foreigner of Filipino descent,
23 residing abroad, and contracted by the government to return and serve in the
24 Philippines along his or her field of expertise under short, medium or long term
25 engagement.
- 26 (b) Balik Scientist Program – the program institutionalized under this Act.

- 1 (c) Short-Term Engagement – the term of engagement under the Program with a minimum
2 duration of 15 days to maximum duration of six (6) months per award to be served
3 within one (1) year from the date of the award;
- 4 (d) Medium-Term Engagement – the term of engagement under the Program with a
5 duration of more than six (6) months but not to exceed one (1) year per award to be
6 served within two (2) to three (3) years from the date of the award;
- 7 (e) Long-Term Engagement – the term of engagement under the Program with duration of
8 more than one (1) year to three (3) years, subject to renewal to be determined by DOST
9 and to be served within five (5) years from the date of the award.

10 **SECTION 5. General Benefits, Incentives and Privileges.** – All Balik Scientists under short,
11 medium, or long term engagement, shall be eligible for the following general benefits,
12 incentives, and privileges:

- 13 (a) Exemption form the licensing or permitting requirements of the Professional Regulation
14 Commission (PRC): *Provided*, That the DOST shall submit to the PRC the list of Balik
15 Scientists with the corresponding duration of awarded engagement;
- 16 (b) Accident and medical insurance covering the duration of the engagement awarded by
17 the DOST;
- 18 (c) Reimbursement of expenses for excess baggage allowance related to scientific project
19 or activities;
- 20 (d) Exemption from renouncing their oath of allegiance to the country where they took the
21 oath, unless the Balik Scientist after the service decides to repatriate and retain the
22 government position, as applicable.
- 23 (e) Tax and duty exemption in the donation of equipment, instruments, and materials to
24 DOST: *Provided*, That DOST shall bear the freight and storage expenses related to the
25 importation and transportation of the donated equipment, instruments, and materials;
26
- 27 (f) Tax and duty exemption in the importation of professional equipment, instruments, and
28 materials of the Balik Scientists;

29 **SECTION 6. Term-Specific Benefits, Incentives, and Privileges.** – Balik Scientists shall be eligible
30 to benefits, incentives, and privileges under the following terms of the engagement:

31 A. Short Term Program:

- 32 1. One (1) free round-trip business class airfare originating from a foreign country to
33 the Philippines, exempt from Philippine Travel Tax;
- 34
- 35 2. When applicable, DOST–subsidized and –facilitated application for a visa whose
36 validity shall cover the duration of the awarded engagement;
- 37
- 38 3. Tax exempt daily allowance in accordance with the prevailing rates prescribed by the
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as determined by the DOST; and
- 39
- 40 4. Participation in Grants-in-Aid (GIA) research and development projects of the DOST
41 subject to guidelines to be provided in the implementing rules and regulations. A
lump sum research subsidy of Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PHP 500,000.00) shall

1 be granted to the Balik Scientist in accordance with relevant government regulations
2 and the need of the program involved;

3 B. Medium Term Program:

- 4 1. One (1) free round-trip business class airfare originating from a foreign country to
5 the Philippines, exempt from Philippine Travel Tax;
6
7 2. When applicable, DOST–subsidized and –facilitated application for a visa whose
8 validity shall cover the duration of the awarded engagement;
- 9 3. Tax exempt daily allowance in accordance with the prevailing rates prescribed by the
10 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as determined by the DOST;
- 11 4. Participation in Grants-in-Aid (GIA) research and development projects of the DOST
12 subject to guidelines to be provided in the implementing rules and regulations. An
13 initial lump sum research subsidy of at least Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PHP
14 500,000.00), and at most Two Million Pesos (PHP 2,000,000.00) shall be granted to
15 the Balik Scientist in accordance with relevant government regulations and the need
16 of the program involved; and
- 17 5. Monthly housing or accommodation allowance;

18
19 C. Long Term Program:

- 20 1. One (1) free round-trip business class airfare originating from a foreign country to
21 the Philippines, exempt from the Philippine Travel Tax, for the awardees, their
22 spouses, and minor dependents;
- 23 2. Special Relocation Benefits:
- 24 a. Special non-immigrant visa, for awardees, their spouses, and minor children:
25 *Provided*, That the validity of the visa shall cover the duration of the awarded
26 long-term engagement;
- 27 b. Exemption from the requirement to secure an alien employment permit from
28 the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for Balik Scientists and their
29 spouses;
- 30 c. Exemption from submission of immigration clearance certificate and payment of
31 multiple entry fees;
- 32 d. Tax and duty exemption in the importation of personal and household effects,
33 professional equipment, instruments, and materials of the Balik Scientist;
- 34 e. Tax and duty exemption in the importation of one (1) motor vehicle whose gross
35 vehicle weight (GVW) does not exceed 3.5 tons, and subject to the motor vehicle
36 classification standard set forth by the Bureau of Customs: *Provided*, That the
37 Balik Scientist, assisted by the DOST, shall ensure compliance with other
38 applicable rules and regulations in the importation of motor vehicles: *Provided*,
39 *further*, That an endorsement from the DOST shall suffice as substitute to the
40 required personal appearance: *Provided, finally*, That the Balik Scientist shall be
41 exempt from posting bond and exportation of the motor vehicle to the country
42 of origin upon the expiration of the award;

- 1 f. Guaranteed admission to the preferred schools for the minor children of Balik
2 Scientists;
- 3 g. Guaranteed job opportunities for the spouse of the Balik Scientist;
- 4 h. Relocation allowance to be determined by DOST; and
- 5 i. Monthly housing or accommodation allowance;
- 6 3. Participation in Grants-in Aid for research and development projects approved by
7 the Secretary of DOST. A lump sum research subsidy of Two Million Pesos (PHP
8 2,000,000.00) shall be granted to the Balik Scientist in accordance with relevant
9 government rules and regulations and the need of the program involved; and
- 10 4. Funding for the establishment and development of a facility or laboratory; *Provided,*
11 That the facility or laboratory shall be deemed government property.

12 **SECTION 7. Role in the R&D Leadership Program of DOST.** – Awardees are entitled to assume
13 some mentorship, eadership, professional or technical positions in the Research and
14 Development (R&D) Leadership Program under the Science for Change Program (S4CP) of
15 DOST.

16 **SECTION 8. Administration.** – This program shall be administered by the DOST which shall issue
17 the implementing rules and regulations in consultation with appropriate agencies ninety (90)
18 days after the approval of this Act.

19 **SECTION 9. Funding.** – The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be
20 included in the annual budget of the DOST in accordance with the Annual General
21 Appropriations Act.

22 **SECTION 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from the
23 effectivity of this Act, DOST, in consultation with concerned agencies and other relevant
24 stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective
25 implementation of this Act.

26 **SECTION 11. Separability Clause.** – Should any provision herein be declared unconstitutional,
27 the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this Act.

28 **SECTION 12. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other
29 issuances or parts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified
30 accordingly.

31 **SECTION 13. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the
32 Official Gazette or in any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

33 *Approved,*