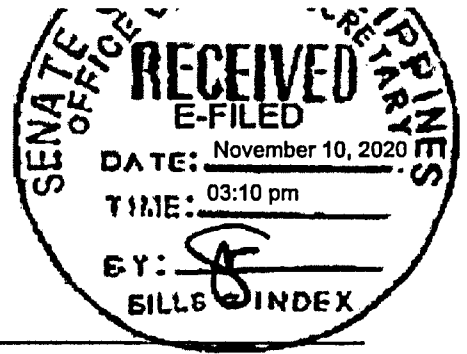


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

SENATE
S. No. 1911



Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

**AN ACT
REQUIRING THE USE OF PLAIN LANGUAGE IN ALL GOVERNMENT-ISSUED
PUBLIC ADVISORIES, NOTICES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SIMILAR
DOCUMENTS INTENDED FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION AND
DISTRIBUTION**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 24, Article II and Section 7, Article III of the 1987 Constitution are the two provisions in the fundamental law of the land that highlight the important role of public information and communication in our democratic governance:

ARTICLE II, SECTION 24. The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.

ARTICLE III, SECTION 7. The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents, and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law.

An informed citizenry consists of active participants and partners in the programs, activities and projects of the government towards national development. An Informed citizenry knows and understands the laws, rules and regulations of the

country and is therefore fully equipped to comply with them. An informed citizenry can properly provide responses and feedback to the effectivity and efficiency of government actions. An informed citizenry is an empowered citizenry.

To ensure this, the government must use the right and appropriate communication tools, such as documents, advisories, notices and announcements, that the people can easily understand and comprehend. Public communications must be characterized by the use of plain language in a clear, concise and well-organized manner, which must, as much as possible, be free from technical words and jargon.

As a step towards this direction, this bill seeks to require all national government agencies, offices, instrumentalities, including government-owned and – controlled corporations (GOCCS), to adopt the use of plain language in English, Filipino and/or other regional languages or dialects in all government-issued public advisories, notices, announcements and similar documents intended for public dissemination and distribution. Among the kinds of documents envisioned to be covered by this proposed measure are: advisories; notices; announcements; bulletins; forms and other papers for the application, request or enjoyment of a public service, right, privilege, benefit, license, clearance, permit, etc.; the agency's citizens' charter; documents detailing and explaining a government program, activity or project; and replies and responses to an inquiry or request for assistance or information. The government bodies that will be tasked to ensure and monitor compliance of this plain language requirement are the Civil Service Commission (for national government agencies and offices) and the Governance Commission for GOCCs (for GOCCs). The CSC and GCG are likewise required to regularly conduct trainings, seminars and other similar capacity-building activities for the offices and agencies covered by the requirement. For plain language in Filipino and other regional languages or dialects, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) shall be tapped to facilitate the necessary capacity-building activities.

Thus, this bill in essence envisions to add an equally important principle to an oft-quoted definition of a democracy: a government of the people, by the people and

for the people,¹ AND A GOVERNMENT THAT THE PEOPLE WILL KNOW AND UNDERSTAND.

In view of this, early passage of this bill is sought.



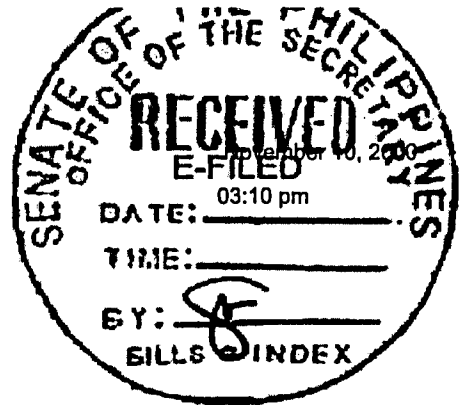
MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator

¹ Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address* (1863)
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

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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 "Plain Language in
2 Government Documents Act."

3
4 Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – In recognition of the vital role of
5 communication and information in nation-building, it is imperative that all documents
6 and communications from the government intended for public dissemination and
7 distribution shall be clear, comprehensible, concise, and language-accessible. The
8 citizenry must be able to easily understand and use the information presented in such
9 documents.

10
11 Section 3. *Plain Language in All Government Documents.* – To ensure the
12 widest accessibility, clarity and easy understanding of public information, all national
13 government agencies, offices, instrumentalities, including government-owned and –
14 controlled corporations (GOCCS), are hereby mandated to adopt the use of plain

1 language in English, Filipino and/or other regional languages or dialects, as may be
2 deemed necessary, for all covered documents under this Act.

3
4 For this purpose, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) is hereby tasked with the
5 duty of monitoring and ensuring the implementation of this plain language
6 requirement. For GOCCs, the Governance Commission for GOCCs (GCG) shall be the
7 agency tasked to perform this duty.

8
9 **Section 4. *Scope of Application.*** – The following are the documents issued by
10 the government intended for public dissemination and distribution covered by this Act:

- 11 a. **Advisories;**
- 12 b. **Notices;**
- 13 c. **Announcements;**
- 14 d. **Bulletins;**
- 15 e. **Forms and other papers for the application, request or enjoyment of a**
16 **public service, right, privilege, benefit, license, clearance, permit, etc.;**
- 17 f. **The agency's citizens' charter;**
- 18 g. **Documents detailing and explaining a government program, activity or**
19 **project;**
- 20 h. **Replies and responses to an inquiry or request for assistance or**
21 **information; and**
- 22 i. **Any other document that the PIA or GCG as the case may be, in**
23 **consultation with the agency or office concerned, deems as important**
24 **to be included in this Act's coverage.**

25
26 **Section 5. *Training and Capacity-Building.*** – The CSC and GCG shall regularly
27 conduct trainings, seminars and other similar capacity-building activities for the offices
28 and agencies covered by this Act. For plain language in Filipino and other regional
29 languages or dialects, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) shall be tapped to
30 facilitate the necessary capacity-building activities.

31
32 **Section 6. *Report to Congress.*** – Within one (1) year after the effectivity of this

1 Act and every two (2) years thereafter, the CSC and GCG shall submit a report to
2 Congress on the status of implementation and compliance with this Act.

3

4 Section 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from
5 the effectivity of this Act, the CSC and GCG, in coordination with the KWF, the
6 Philippine Information Agency (PIA), and other relevant government agencies and
7 stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the
8 provisions of this Act.

9

10 Section 8. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,
11 proclamations, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with
12 the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

13

14 Section 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act, or the
15 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid,
16 the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

17

18 Section 10. *Effectivity Clause.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
19 from its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
20 circulation.

21

22 *Approved,*