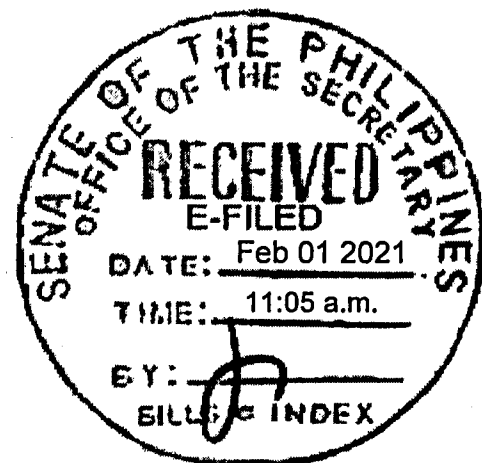


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE
S. No. 2031

Introduced by SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

**AN ACT
CREATING THE EASTERN VISAYAS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EVDA)
DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Our Constitution provides that "all sectors of the economy and all regions of the country shall be given optimum opportunity to develop." It is incumbent upon the State to ensure that the regions, especially the rural areas, shall be adequately supported and empowered to realize economic prosperity which brings benefits down to the grassroots level.

Eastern Visayas or Region VIII is composed of three main islands – Samar, Leyte and Biliran. Despite having the two largest islands in the country which are blessed with abundant natural and human resources, the region remains one of the poorest. While poverty incidence among the population in the region reduced over the years, 31 out of 100 individuals still belong to the poor. Data from Philippine Statistics Authority show that in 2018, poverty incidence among population in Eastern Samar was estimated at 49.5%; Northern Samar at 34.0%; Samar at 29.0%; Leyte at 28.6%; Southern Leyte at 23.6%; and Biliran at 19.7%¹. It is also worth noting that their geographic location makes the region vulnerable to typhoons which add to the dire condition of the residents, as experienced during the onslaught of super typhoon Yolanda, one of the strongest typhoons recorded in modern history.

¹ "Poverty situation in Eastern Visayas (Full Year 2018)." <http://rso08.psa.gov.ph/article/poverty-situation-eastern-visayas-full-year-2018#sthash.J1mUh2vL.QK0wLHKy.dpbs>

This bill seeks to establish the Eastern Visayas Development Authority to plan, accelerate and facilitate the growth of the region. The body shall have the following purposes:

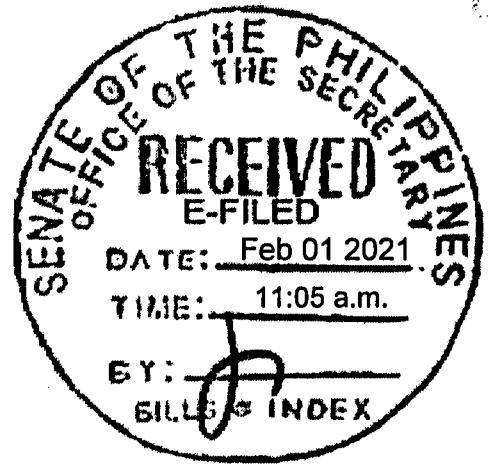
- 1) Promote the development of Eastern Visayas by initiating or undertaking development and business projects;
- 2) Integrate government and private sector efforts and resources in the pursuit of sustainable development and balanced growth of Eastern Visayas, as proposed in the post-Yolanda rehabilitation plan and other development plans;
- 3) Facilitate investments in any field as would enhance the economic development of the region; and
- 4) Provide a model for the full implementation of a comprehensive regional industrialization and agricultural modernization policy.

It is hoped that with the creation of this special body, whose singular focus will be the achievement of social and economic progress of the region, we can lift more Filipino families out of poverty and further improve their standard of living.

In this light, the consideration of this bill is earnestly sought.


RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Eastern Visayas
2 Development Authority (EVDA) Act.”

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 promote and accelerate the sound and balanced industrial, economic and social
5 growth of Eastern Visayas and ensure its speedy rehabilitation in the aftermath of
6 typhoons Haiyan by increasing trade, tourism and investments, encouraging private
7 enterprise, and advancing efforts towards progress and development within the
8 context of national plans and policies in order to provide jobs to the people, especially
9 those in rural areas, increase their productivity and their individual and family incomes,
10 and thereby improve the quality of their living conditions.

11 Towards this end, an effective institutional mechanism shall be established in
12 order to address the need for a coordinated and integrated approach in the
13 formulation and implementation of plans, programs, and projects geared towards
14 economic growth and development in the Eastern Visayas region, including the
15 establishment, among others, of special economic zones.

1 Sec. 3. *Creation.* – The Eastern Visayas Development Authority, hereinafter
2 referred to as the Authority, is hereby created, which shall promote, coordinate and
3 facilitate the active and extensive participation of all sectors in the socioeconomic
4 development of Eastern Visayas.

5 Sec. 4. *Coverage.* – The Authority shall cover all the provinces of Northern
6 Samar, Eastern Samar, Western Samar, Leyte, Biliran and Southern Leyte the
7 independent city of Ormoc and the highly urbanized City of Tacloban.

8 Sec. 5. *Main Office.* – The Authority shall have its main office in Tacloban City.
9 It may establish other satellite office in Metro Manila and in other provinces within
10 Eastern Visayas, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of this Act. The Authority shall
11 have a term of fifty (50) years from the effectivity of its Act, renewable for the same
12 period unless otherwise provided by law.

13 Sec. 6. *Purpose.* – The Authority shall have the following purposes and
14 objectives:

- 15 a) To promote the development of Eastern Visayas by initiating or undertaking,
16 by itself or otherwise, development and business projects of corporate,
17 economic nature whether in agriculture, power, infrastructure, energy,
18 public utilities, land development, manufacturing, exploration or utilization
19 of natural resources and other fields or projects;
- 20 b) To integrate government and private sector efforts and resources in the
21 pursuit of sustainable development and balanced growth of Eastern Visayas,
22 as proposed in the post-Haiyan rehabilitation plan and other relevant
23 development plans, programs and projects;
- 24 c) To facilitate investments in any field as would enhance the economic
25 development of the region; and
- 26 d) To provide a model for the full implementation of a comprehensive regional
27 industrialization and agricultural modernization policy.

28 Sec. 7. *Powers and Functions of the Authority.* – The Authority shall have the
29 following powers and functions:

- 30 a) Formulate an integrated development framework for Eastern Visayas that
31 is, as far as practicable, consistent with the peace and development
32 initiatives of the national government;

- 1 b) Provide strategic direction for the long-term economic development of
2 Eastern Visayas;
- 3 c) Integrate, prioritize, program and implement, whenever allowed and
4 authorized by applicable laws, specific programs, activities and projects
5 within Eastern Visayas, including Official Development Assistance (ODA)
6 projects, subject to such limitations prescribed by existing laws, rules, and
7 regulations;
- 8 d) Recommend to and, whenever necessary, call upon the appropriate
9 agencies of the national government or any of its instrumentalities, to lend
10 the necessary technical support for, assistance and prioritization in the
11 implementation of agricultural, industrial, commercial, infrastructure,
12 environmental, tourism and technological programs and projects;
- 13 e) Advocate to the constituents of Eastern Visayas, their elected
14 representatives in Congress, and the national government, policies that will
15 foster the integrated and balanced development of Eastern Visayas;
- 16 f) Promote and facilitate investments in any field that would enhance the
17 socioeconomic development of Eastern Visayas and uplift the living
18 standards of the people in close coordination with agencies primarily
19 mandated to undertake such functions;
- 20 g) Explore sources for financing priority programs, projects, and activities that
21 are critical to the development of Eastern Visayas;
- 22 h) Coordinate and facilitate the extension of necessary planning, management,
23 and technical assistance to prospective and existing investors, to
24 complement the efforts of agencies primarily mandated to execute such
25 functions;
- 26 i) Establish a comprehensive and integrated database on Eastern Visayas to
27 support planning and decision making;
- 28 j) Perform prior screening functions, as a condition precedent to the approval
29 by any national, provincial or municipal government agency, of any permit,
30 license, franchise, or concession for the operation of any business or the
31 exploitation, development or utilization of natural resources within Eastern
32 Visayas;

- 1 k) Negotiate and enter into management or consulting contracts with local or
2 foreign management consulting firms for the management of the Authority
3 or the planning and implementation of agricultural, tourism, and industrial
4 development projects in Eastern Visayas;
- 5 l) Avail of the expertise of any particular employee, technician, or group of
6 persons in any bureau, office, or department of the national government
7 whose services are deemed urgently needed for the attainment of the goals
8 of the Authority, with the consent and approval of the department head
9 concerned;
- 10 m) Conduct specific experiments, investigation, and research to discover
11 economical and practical methods of increasing agricultural and industrial
12 production and other related endeavors;
- 13 n) Encourage and organize cooperative ventures in agriculture, agri-business,
14 industry, tourism and commerce and assist them by arranging appropriate
15 financing schemes, for their plans and projects;
- 16 o) Monitor, evaluate, and formulate recommendations in the implementation
17 of Eastern Visayas-wide development programs, activities and projects;
- 18 p) Establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation of
19 Eastern Visayas-wide projects, whenever necessary, including public-private
20 partnership;
- 21 q) Review and recommend for approval by the National Economic and
22 Development Authority (NEDA) Board programs, projects, and plans by the
23 national government and donor agencies for implementation in Eastern
24 Visayas, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;
- 25 r) Recommend the creation and supervise the development and operation of
26 special economic zones according to the principles and provisions set forth
27 in this Act and Republic Act 7916, or the Special Economic Zone Act of 1995,
28 as amended;
- 29 s) Interface with foreign assistance agencies and international aid
30 organizations, in coordination with the NEDA and other relevant national
31 government agencies, for the purposes of obtaining financing support,
32 grants and donations for its programs and projects;

- 1 t) Receive and administer donations, contributions, grants, bequests or gifts,
2 in cash or in kind, from foreign governments, international agencies, private
3 entities and other sources, including ODA, to be used in the development
4 of Eastern Visayas, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations;
5 u) To sue and be sued, enter into contracts, acquire, purchase, hold, lease,
6 transfer, and dispose of property of any kind or nature to carry out the
7 purposes of this Act; and
8 v) Discharge other functions that may be deemed necessary or as may be
9 provided by law.

10 In the discharge of its functions, the Authority shall ensure appropriate
11 consultation and coordination with the Regional Development Council Eastern Visayas
12 (RDC-EV) and other local development councils as well as with national government
13 agencies, local government units, accredited people's organizations, non-government
14 organizations and the private sector operating in Eastern Visayas.

15 The Authority, through the EVDA Chairperson, shall submit to the President of
16 the Philippines and both Houses of Congress annual reports on its accomplishments
17 and activities.

18 **Sec. 8. Board of Directors.** – The Authority's overall direction and thrusts shall
19 be provided and approved, unless provided otherwise in this Act, by the EVDA Board
20 of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the Board. It shall be composed of the following
21 members:

- 22 a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;
23 b) The Chairperson of the Regional Development Council of Eastern Visayas
24 (RDC-EV) as *ex officio* member;
25 c) A member of the Senate, upon designation by the Senate President, who
26 shall be an *ex officio* member;
27 d) A member of the House of Representatives, chosen by the District
28 Representatives of the legislative districts comprising Eastern Visayas, who
29 shall be an *ex officio* member;
30 e) The Regional President of the League of Municipalities-Eastern Visayas
31 Chapter;

1 f) Three (3) private sector representatives to be appointed by the President,
2 upon the recommendation of the Board comprising of one (1) representative
3 each from the:

- 4 1) Eastern Visayas business sector;
- 5 2) Eastern Visayas academic sector; and
- 6 3) Eastern Visayas non-government sector.

7 The term of office of the three (3) representatives from the private sector shall
8 be six (6) years: *Provided*, That at the initial appointment of such members, the
9 second member to be appointed shall only serve a term of four (4) years and the third
10 member to be appointed shall only serve a term of two (2) years: *Provided, further*,
11 That they shall continue to hold office until their successors shall have been appointed.
12 All vacancies, prior to the expiration of the term, shall be filled for the unexpired term
13 only.

14 The members of the Board shall be entitled to reimbursements for actual and
15 necessary expenses incurred, either for their attendance in the meetings of the Board
16 or in connection with other official business authorized by resolution of the Board,
17 subject to existing laws and regulations.

18 The term of the *ex officio* members including the Senator and the Member of
19 the House of Representatives shall correspond to their term as elected officials.

20 *Sec. 9. Functions of the Board of Directors.* – The Board shall have the following
21 functions:

- 22 a) Provide direction and guidance for the Authority's work and thrusts for
23 Eastern Visayas;
- 24 b) Ensure that the goals and policies of the Authority are consistent with the
25 overall national development goals and objectives;
- 26 c) Ensure that the programs of the Authority are consistent with regional and
27 local development plans, programs and projects and vice versa;
- 28 d) Explore sources for financing of priority Eastern Visayas-wide development;
- 29 e) Create committees or task forces as may be deemed necessary for the
30 accomplishment of the plans, programs, projects and activities of the
31 Authority;

1 f) Determine schedules, establish voting procedures, criteria for the
2 constitution of a quorum and other rules and regulations in the conduct of
3 Board meetings; and

4 g) Perform such functions as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of
5 this Act.

6 Sec. 10. *Executive Committee.* – The Board shall constitute an Executive
7 Committee from among its membership to act, for and on its behalf when the Board
8 is not in session, on urgent matters as may be deemed necessary by the Chairperson.

9 The following shall comprise the Executive Committee:

10 a) The EVDA Chairperson as head;

11 b) The Eastern Visayas Regional Development Council (RDC) Chairperson;

12 c) The Private Sector Representative from the business sector;

13 d) The Private Sector Representative from the academic sector; and

14 e) The Private Sector Representative from the non-government sector.

15 Sec. 11. *Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer.* – The EVDA Chairperson shall
16 be appointed by the President of the Philippines with the rank of Undersecretary and
17 shall act as Chief Executive Officer of the Authority. The Chairperson and Chief
18 Executive Officer shall serve a term of six (6) years from the date of appointment
19 unless removed for cause: *Provided,* That the person who shall be appointed as
20 Chairperson must be a Filipino citizen, of good moral character, of proven probity and
21 integrity and a holder of a degree in economics, business, public administration, law,
22 management or related fields, and with at least five (5) years relevant experience
23 preferably in the field of management or public administration: *Provided, further,* That
24 the appointee for Chairperson shall have been a resident of Eastern Visayas for at
25 least five (5) years before the appointment.

26 The Chairperson shall have the following duties and functions:

27 a) Call and preside over meetings of the Board and see to it that the policies,
28 programs and rules and regulations are implemented properly;

29 b) Call on technical experts in the formulation and implementation of a
30 comprehensive and integrated development plan for Eastern Visayas,
31 investment programs and the preparation of investment programming

- 1 priorities, annual reports, and other pertinent documents approved by the
2 Authority;
- 3 c) Identify solutions to key issues and concerns, taking into account related
4 risks, relative impact, and affected parties in coordination with the Board
5 and key stakeholders;
- 6 d) Advocate the Authority's work among the various concerned sectors and
7 stakeholders;
- 8 e) Call on any agency, group, individual member of the Board, local
9 government unit, and host community to address issues and concerns
10 relating to implementation of major programs, projects and activities;
- 11 f) Supervise the monitoring and timely implementation of Eastern Visayas-
12 wide programs, projects and activities;
- 13 g) Endorse to the Board all policy recommendations, plans and programs for
14 approval;
- 15 h) Accept, on behalf of the Authority donations, contributions, grants and
16 bequests or gifts, in cash or in kind, from members, foreign governments,
17 international agencies, private entities or any individual for purpose that will
18 realize the functions of the Authority;
- 19 i) Supervise administrative operations including disbursement of any fund of
20 the Authority, subject to the usual accounting and auditing procedures, and
21 submit reports thereon;
- 22 j) Execute and administer the policies and measures approved by the Board;
- 23 k) Appoint, remove, dismiss or otherwise discipline for cause, all employees of
24 the Authority, in accordance with the standard guidelines for recruitment,
25 employment, and discipline in the Civil Service Code;
- 26 l) Represent the Authority in all dealings with other offices, agencies and
27 instrumentalities of the government and with all persons and entities, public
28 or private;
- 29 m) Sign agreements and/or contracts on behalf of the Authority, including
30 those for expert and consultancy services and other reports of
31 accountabilities emanating from the Authority;

- 1 n) Serve as *ex officio* member of the Board of Directors of the NEDA and the
2 TIEZA; and
3 o) Perform such other functions that the Board may direct to carry out the
4 provisions of this Act.

5 Sec. 12. *Deputy Chairperson.* – The EVDA Chairperson shall be assisted by one
6 Deputy Chairperson, who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines with
7 the rank of Assistant Secretary upon the recommendation of the EVDA Chairperson.
8 The Deputy Chairperson shall have the same qualifications as the Chairperson and
9 shall perform such duties and functions as may be assigned by the Chairperson or as
10 provided for by law.

11 Sec. 13. *Executive Director.* – An Executive Director shall be appointed by the
12 President of the Philippines upon the recommendation by the Chairperson: *Provided,*
13 That no person shall be appointed as Executive Director unless one is a Filipino citizen,
14 of good moral character, of proven probity and integrity and a holder of a degree in
15 economics, business, public administration, law, management or other related fields,
16 and have at least five (5) years relevant experience in said fields: *Provided, further,*
17 That the appointee to the position of Executive Director shall have been a resident of
18 Eastern Visayas for five (5) years prior to appointment and has the requisite eligibilities
19 for third level career service position, pursuant to the career executive rank system:
20 *Provided, finally,* that the appointee shall reside in Eastern Visayas while serving in
21 such office.

22 The Executive Director shall assist the Chairperson in carrying out the functions
23 of the Authority and shall, likewise, serve as the Secretary of the Board.

24 Sec. 14. *EVDA Advisory Council.* – There is hereby constituted an EVDA
25 Advisory Committee to be composed of the following:

- 26 a) EVDA Chairperson as head;
27 b) The Eastern Visayas RDC Chairperson;
28 c) The District Representatives of the legislative districts comprising Eastern
29 Visayas;
30 d) The Provincial Governors of the provinces comprising Eastern Visayas;
31 e) The City Mayors of the independent cities in Eastern Visayas;

1 f) The Regional Directors of the national line agencies with regional offices in
2 Eastern Visayas;

3 The EVDA Advisory Council shall convene at least once every six (6) months,
4 or as often as necessary, upon the call of the EVDA Chairperson, advise or be consulted
5 by the Authority on important matters related to Eastern Visayas.

6 Sec. 15. *Organizational Structure.* – The Board of Directors, upon the
7 recommendation of the Chairperson shall determine the organizational structure,
8 staffing pattern and compensation of the Authority subject to Civil Service laws, rules
9 and regulations and Republic Act No. 11466, otherwise known as "Salary
10 Standardization Law of 2019," and the Position Classification and Compensation
11 System. The Chairperson may reorganize the Authority and may create or abolish
12 divisions, units or branches therein as the exigencies of the affairs of the Authority
13 may require.

14 Sec. 16. *Merit System.* – All officials and employees of the EVDA shall be
15 selected and appointed on the basis of merit and fitness in accordance with civil service
16 law, rules and regulations. The recruitment, transfer, promotion, and dismissal of all
17 its personnel including temporary workers shall be governed by a merit system that
18 will be established by the EVDA in compliance with existing laws, rules and regulations.

19 Sec. 17. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this
20 Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act: *Provided,* That the
21 operating expenses of the Authority should not exceed fourteen percent (14%) of the
22 annual appropriation: *Provided further,* That at least eighty-six percent (86%) of said
23 annual appropriation shall be disbursed for the programs, projects, and activities of
24 the Authority.

25 Sec. 18. *Transfer of Post-Haiyan Rehabilitation Funds.* – The authority, control
26 and administration of funds, equipment and properties donated by foreign
27 governments, foreign and local non-profit agencies and foundations and private
28 entities to the National Government for the purpose of the rehabilitation of areas in
29 Eastern Visayas that were affected by Typhoon Haiyan, as well as all other funds
30 received or appropriated by the National Government for the same purpose are hereby
31 transferred to the Authority. Hereafter, the Authority shall exercise the sole power of
32 disposition and control of the rehabilitation funds, in accordance with the provisions

1 of this Act or until the purposes for which the said funds had been donated are
2 accomplished.

3 **Sec. 19. *Formulation of the Eastern Visayas Development Master Plan.*** – Upon
4 its organization, the Authority shall formulate and submit its development master plan
5 to NEDA for integration into the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan and public
6 investment program. The Eastern Visayas Development Master Plan shall serve as the
7 framework for the accelerated and balanced development of Eastern Visayas in
8 accordance with the aims and purposes of this Act.

9 **Sec. 20. *Administrative Supervision.*** – The Authority shall be under the direct
10 supervision of the President of the Philippines.

11 **Sec. 21. *Interpretation.*** – The powers, authorities, and functions that are vested
12 in the Authority are intended to decentralize government functions and authority and
13 promote an efficient and effective working relationship between the EVDA, the
14 national government, and the local government units.

15 **Sec. 22. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The EVDA shall adopt rules
16 and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act within sixty (60) days from the
17 date its approval.

18 **Sec. 23 *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
19 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision or part not otherwise
20 affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

21 **Sec. 24. *Repealing Clause.*** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
22 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or
23 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
24 accordingly.

25 **Sec. 25. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
26 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,