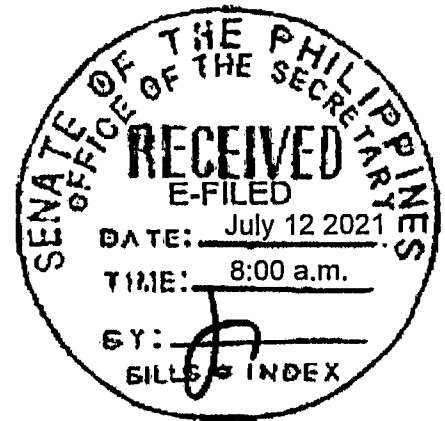


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



SENATE

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 768

Introduced by Senators FRANCIS N. PANGILINAN, VICENTE C. SOTTO III,
RALPH G. RECTO, FRANKLIN M. DRILON, MARIA LOURDES NANCY S.
BINAY, LEILA M. DE LIMA, RICHARD J. GORDON, RISA HONTIVEROS,
PANFILO "PING" M. LACSON, EMMANUEL "MANNY" D. PACQUIAO, GRACE
L. POE, JOEL VILLANUEVA

RESOLUTION

TO DIRECT THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO REPORTS OF PUBLIC FUNDS BEING
SPENT ON TROLL FARMS THAT SPREAD MISINFORMATION AND FAKE NEWS
IN SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

WHEREAS, advertising firms We are Social and Hootsuite, in their 2020 annual report, found that Filipinos spend an average of four (4) hours and fifteen (15) minutes each day on social media - topping the world rankings for the sixth (6th) straight year.¹ The Philippines is also highest in the world in internet usage with an average of ten (10) hours and fifty-six (56) minutes²;

WHEREAS, this rise of Filipinos' social media and internet usage for the past few years paved the way for the propagation of internet trolls. A social media troll is "someone who creates conflict on sites like Twitter, Facebook and Reddit by posting messages that are particularly controversial or inflammatory with the sole intent of provoking an emotional response from other users." These messages from trolls distract and "take focus away from the subject at hand, sending a rational discussion down a rabbit hole of obscenities, personal attacks, and jokes."³ Most trolls also post "misleading statements or outright lies [on] the internet to manipulate public perception of issues or persons."⁴ Usually, trolls "would set up [] fake social media account[s] in order to retain their anonymity and escape prosecution."⁵

WHEREAS, according to the above annual report, 57.2% of Filipinos say that they are concerned about misinformation and fake news⁶;

WHEREAS, Senator Panfilo Lacson recently alleged that "a government undersecretary has been organizing internet troll farms across the country to target political rivals or those not aligned with President Rodrigo Duterte's administration."⁷ The undersecretary is allegedly organizing at least two (2) troll farms per province,

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/technology/internet-culture/hootsuite-we-are-social-2021-philippines-top-social-media-internet-usage>

² *Id.*

³ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/answering-a-social-troll_b_6625654

⁴ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1448598/probe-troll-farms-lawmakers-urge>

⁵ https://www.privacy.com.ph/internet-trolls-in-the-philippines/#_ftn6

⁶ <https://www.rappler.com/technology/internet-culture/hootsuite-we-are-social-2021-philippines-top-social-media-internet-usage>

⁷ <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/6/8/lacson-undersecretary-troll-farm-malacanang.html>

according to Senator Lacson's source.⁸ The administration, through Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque, denied the allegation and said that, if the allegations were indeed true, perhaps "the official in question must be doing it in his personal capacity."⁹;

WHEREAS, the Department of Finance (DOF) awarded a Php909,122 communications strategy consultancy contract to a public relations practitioner who was tagged by Facebook itself as the "operator behind a pro-Duterte fake account network which Facebook took down in March 2019."¹⁰ The network was comprised of two hundred (200) pages, with about 3.6 million followers following at least one page and about 1.8 million users in at least one group.¹¹ Since the contract's amount was less than one million pesos (Php1,000,000), the said public relations practitioner told the media that "he and the DOF directly negotiated instead of a public bidding, which procurement regulations mandated for higher-valued contracts."¹²


WHEREAS, in 2017, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) had a similar social media consultancy contract with a known pro-administration blogger who has been accused of peddling fake news and spreading hateful comments against critics of the administration.¹³ The Duterte administration even appointed some of these bloggers and social media personalities to high positions in various departments and agencies in government;

WHEREAS, the above instances illustrate that troll farms and the misinformation and fake news that they propagate may be state-backed and state-funded. In this connection, Congress should look into government funds that are used to fund misinformation and fake news that affect millions of Filipinos;

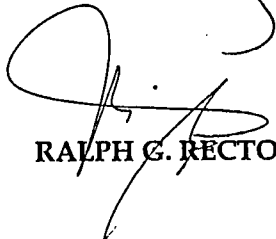
WHEREAS, Filipinos should know why government spends public funds on troll farm operators disguised as "public relations practitioners" and "social media consultants" who sow fake news rather than on COVID-19 assistance, healthcare, food security, jobs protection, education, among others;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation into reports of public funds being spent on troll farms that spread misinformation and fake news in social media sites.

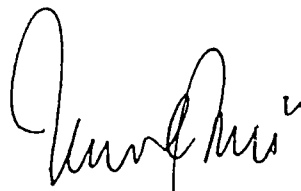
Adopted,



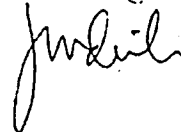
FRANCIS N. PANGILINAN



RALPH G. RECTO



VICENTE C. SOTTO III



FRANKLIN M. DRILON

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ <https://www.rappler.com/technology/dof-hires-nic-gabunada-philstar-report>

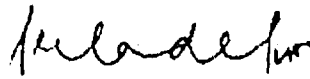
¹¹ *Id.*

¹² <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1449672/dof-defends-hiring-of-controversial-pr-man>

¹³ <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/628649/publicist-tagged-as-pro-roxas-influencer-only-fame-whore-social-climber-would-invent-such-claim/story/>



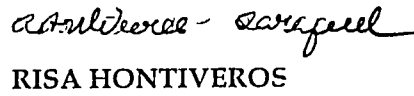
MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY



LEILA M. DE LIMA



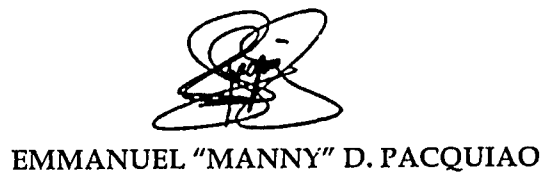
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JOEL VILLANUEVA