

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



SENATE

S. No. 39

Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

**AN ACT
MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ONLINE LEGAL KNOWLEDGE
AND ASSISTANCE SYSTEM THAT WILL BE ACCESSIBLE NATIONWIDE**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

One of the fundamental precepts of our legal system is "Ignorance of the law excuses no one from compliance therewith."¹ It is the duty of every Filipino as law-abiding citizens to know the laws to which they are subjected to. Concomitant to this is the reciprocal duty of the government to publish and disseminate the different laws, rules and regulations approved and made effective within the Philippines. Thus, publication in the Official Gazette or in any other medium as provided by law is a prerequisite for the effectivity of laws. A similar publication requirement is also imposed in important administrative issuances and local ordinances.

However, dissemination through the printing and publication of laws is no longer effective in truly informing the public. Furthermore, a compilation or consolidation of the latest updates and amendments to these laws is not available. For example, the penalties in terms of value of property and damages and fines imposed in the Revised Penal Code (RPC) was updated and amended by Republic Act No. 10951 last 2017. However, errors and confusion in citing the correct value or fine, more particularly by media outlets or in social media pages, still happen. The same applies to recently amended legislation such as the Revised Corporation Code,

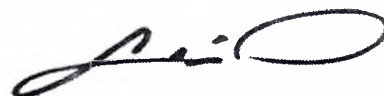
¹ Article 2, Civil Code of the Philippines

National Internal Revenue Code, Labor Code, among others. And when it comes to legal issues that our citizens usually inquire into or are concerned with, such as marriage and family relations, inheritance, violence against women and children, land titles and property registration, sales, loans and mortgages, etc., there is currently no updated, free and reliable website that contains these pieces of information, along with helpful definition of terms, translations to Filipino and other local languages and simple summaries of legal concepts and ideas.

Kung nais po nating maging isang bansang pinaghaharian ng batas, kailangan po nating pasimplehin ang kailangang gawin para makita at masuri ng ating mga kababayan ang mga tamang batas na umiiral sa ating bansa. Hindi lamang sa kanila, makakatulong din po ito sa ating gobyerno at sa ating mga tagapagpatupad ng batas sapagkat sila man ay nangangailangan ng madaling pamamaraan upang balikan at pag-aralan ang mga batas na kanilang ipinapatupad.

In response to this, there is a need for the government to adopt information and communications technology (ICT) as a means to fully inform the public on the contents of our legal system. This bill proposes the establishment of the National Legal Knowledge and Assistance System which shall serve as an online repository of the different laws, rules and regulations of our country. The System will also contain relevant treaties and international conventions wherein the Philippines is a party, common legal forms and pleadings, and definition of terms and brief explanation in simple English, Filipino and other vernacular languages or dialects of common legal concepts, ideas and terminologies. To foster universal access and understandability, translations into Filipino and other vernacular languages or dialects will also be made available in the system. In the proposed measure, partnerships and agreements with government institutions such as the National Library, the Presidential Museum and Library, Senate and House of Representatives Library, the Supreme Court Library, among others, shall also be institutionalized for purposes of allowing digitalization and shared access to books, documents, and resources.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lito', written in a cursive style.

MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator 

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1 **AN ACT**
2 **MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ONLINE LEGAL KNOWLEDGE**
3 **AND ASSISTANCE SYSTEM THAT WILL BE ACCESSIBLE NATIONWIDE**

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

4 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as "*National Legal Knowledge*
5 *and Assistance System Act*".

6 Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — Recognizing the right of the people to
7 information on matters of public concern, it is imperative that free and instant access
8 to official records, documents, and papers pertaining to laws, rules and regulations
9 shall be afforded to every citizen. Towards this end, the use of information and
10 communications technology (ICT) shall be embraced as the primary platform in
11 providing relevant legal knowledge and assistance to the people.

12 Section 3. *Establishment of the National Legal Knowledge and Assistance*
13 *System.* – The Department of Justice (DOJ), in coordination the Department of
14 Information and Communications Technology (DICT), shall establish and maintain an
15 online National Legal Knowledge and Assistance System (hereinafter, the "System")
16 which shall be accessible throughout the country. The contents of this System shall
17 be the following:

- 18 a) Updated and searchable copies of the 1987 Constitution, laws, codes,
19 rules and regulations of the Republic of the Philippines, its political

1 subdivisions and government instrumentalities;

2 b) Relevant treaties and international conventions entered into and binding
3 with the Philippines;

4 c) When practicable and available, translations into Filipino and other
5 vernacular languages or dialects of (a) and (b) above;

6 d) Definition of terms and brief explanation in simple English, Filipino and
7 other vernacular languages or dialects of common legal concepts, ideas
8 and terminologies;

9 e) Legal forms and pleadings such as affidavits, complaints, simple
10 contracts, etc.;

11 f) Contact information or hotlines to the Public Attorney's Office,
12 Integrated Bar of the Philippines and other government and private
13 institutions that offer free or *pro bono* legal aid and assistance; and

14 g) Other information or features that are deemed essential and necessary
15 to achieve the purposes of this Act.

16 Section 4. *Partnership with Other Government Institutions* – The DOJ shall
17 establish partnerships and agreements with similar government institutions such as
18 the National Library, the Presidential Museum and Library, Senate and House of
19 Representatives Library, the Supreme Court Library, the Office of the National
20 Administrative Register of the UP Law Center, among others, for purposes of allowing
21 digitalization and shared access to books, documents, and resources.

22 Section 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations*. – Within sixty (60) days from
23 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Justice, Department of Information and
24 Communications Technology and other relevant government agencies and
25 stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the
26 provisions of this Act.

1 Section. 6. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the implementation of
2 this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations of the year following
3 its enactment into law and thereafter.

4 Section 7. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,
5 proclamations, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with
6 the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

7 Section 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act, or the
8 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid,
9 the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

10 Section 9. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from
11 its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
12 circulation.

13 *Approved,*