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SENATE

Senate Bill No. 917

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INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

Human rights are defined as the supreme inherent and inalienable rights to life, to dignity, and to self-development. It is concerned with issues in areas of civil, political rights, economic, social and cultural rights founded on internationally accepted human rights obligation to which the Philippine Government is state party.

While it is commendable that more and more governments in the world are establishing human rights commissions, it remains a fact that the struggle for human rights is one which is waged and won by individual and groups who experienced being violated, and who fights to win back the rights that have been taken away from them. Human rights is a struggle at all fronts – in the factory, in sweatshops, on the streets, in the home, as well as in courts, in jails and detention centers, and in all places and situations where the dignity of the human person is simplified.

Although human rights are enshrined in the supreme law of the land, many of our people do not have access to basic information about such rights. More often than not, innocent people are convicted partly by reason of their ignorance of such human rights.

This bill which seeks the establishment of the Barangay Human Rights Action Centers is an initiative towards the creation of a culture of human rights in our local communities, so that human rights violations may be prevented and human rights values may be promoted. The peasant who fights for his land, the factory workers that struggles for better wages, the woman or child who is abused, the indigenous cultural communities who are being uprooted from their ancestral land should find in the BHRAC a venue to make human rights protection a reality in the everyday life and struggle for the local community.

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

  
JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA  
Senator

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AN ACT  
ESTABLISHING A BARANGAY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION CENTER IN EVERY  
BARANGAY IN THE COUNTRY

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

**SECTION 1. Title.** This Act shall be known as the "**Barangay Human Rights Action Center (BHRAC) Act**".

**SEC. 2. Role and Creation of the Barangay Human Rights Action Center.** There shall be established a Barangay Human Rights Action Center in every barangay in the country, amending for this purpose Book III on the local Government Units of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code, by adding there to another chapter to be known as:

"Chapter II – The Barangay Human Rights Action Center"

The Center serves as the Human Rights Desk in the barangay to bring the services and programs of the Commission on Human Rights within the reach of the people, especially in the far-flung areas, and as a forum wherein the collective views on the human rights of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered. The Center shall be manned by the Barangay Human Rights Action Officer (BHRAO).

**SEC. 3. Manner of Creation.** The BHRAO shall be established by a resolution approved by the Sangguniang Barangay and the BHRAO shall be chosen or appointed by the Barangay Assembly called for the purpose by the Punong Barangay by a majority of those present. The voting shall be supervised by the City/Municipal local Government Operations Officer and as a representative of the Regional Office and/or sub-Office of the Commission on Human Rights where the barangay is located. The position of the BHRAO is non-political and independent and no elective or appointive or employee of the Government can be chosen as BHRAO.

**SEC. 4. Qualifications of the Barangay Human Rights Action Center.** A person shall be appointed Barangay Human Rights Action Officer if he is:

- a) At least 21 years of age;

- b) A high school graduate;
- c) Of proven integrity; and
- d) Committed to the cause of Human Rights

**SEC. 5. *Tenure and removal from Office of the BHRAO.*** The BHRAO duly chosen by the Barangay Assembly shall serve for a term of five (5) years without re-appointment, unless sooner removed by the Barangay Assembly for causes provided by law, or by reason of death or resignation.

**SEC. 6. *Supervision.*** The Commission on Human Rights shall immediately after the approval of this Act prepare and provide the Barangay with the implementing rules, guidelines and regulation necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act. In coordination with the Barangay, the Commission on Human Rights shall supervise the operation and activities of the BHRAO.

**SEC. 7. *Technical Assistance.*** The Commission on Human Rights shall provide technical assistance in the training of the BHRAO's and whenever possible, provide the barangay with pertinent materials.

**SEC. 8. *Funding.*** This Act shall be initially implemented within the framework of the funds of the Barangay. As far as practicable, the funds required therefore shall be drawn available funds of the city, municipal or provincial governments, and from appropriation of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) for training and program planning.

Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budget of the Commission on Human Rights in the annual General Appropriation Act.

**SEC. 9. *Effectivity.*** This Act shall be effect after fifteen (15) days from publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*