

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



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SENATE

BY: 

Senate Bill No. 886

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Introduced by SENATOR JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

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**AN ACT PROVIDING AN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS  
FILIPINO WORKERS IN DISTRESS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR  
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSE**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIII, Section 3 thereof, states that:

*The State shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all. XXX*

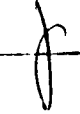
It has consistently been a matter of government policy to provide every possible manner of aid and assistance to our brothers and sisters who toil overseas. But even the best policies must fail if there are no concrete resources allotted to their implementation. As such, in line with House Bills no. 1243 and 5331, this bill aims to create a Special Assistance Fund for Overseas Filipino Workers in Distress, to ensure that our overseas countrymen who are most in need shall be provided with, not just the cold comfort of intangible promises, but the financial aid necessary to ensure their freedom and good health. They certainly deserve no less.

The passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

**JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO**

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**AN ACT**  
**PROVIDING AN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO**  
**WORKERS IN DISTRESS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR**  
**OTHER PURPOSES**

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

1           **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "*Distressed*  
2 *OFW Assistance Act of 2016.*"

3  
4           **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is hereby declared a policy of the  
5 State that full protection must be accorded to overseas workers, particularly  
6 those who are forced to seek employment abroad in order to provide for their  
7 families at home. Furthermore, this assistance to overseas Filipino worker must  
8 be without distinction, covering both documented and undocumented migrant  
9 workers.

10  
11           **SECTION 3. Creation of Fund.** - A Special Assistance Fund for  
12 Overseas Filipino Workers in Distress, in the amount of One Billion Pesos  
13 (P1,000,000,000.00) is hereby created. The fund shall be utilized for the  
14 following purposes:

- 15  
16           (a)    Repatriation;  
17           (b)    Medical expenses, hospitalization and purchase of medicine in  
18 the form of vouchers for six (6) months from arrival;  
19           (c)    Migration fees for overstaying Filipinos;

1 (d) Legal assistance including litigation expenses, legal fees, payment  
2 of translation fees, attendance in court hearings;

3 (e) Basic necessities of OFWs caught in emergencies or are detained.  
4

5 Provided, That at least thirty percent (30 %) of the total fund shall be  
6 allotted to provide monetary support, in the form of a lump sum payment not  
7 in excess of Fifty Thousand pesos (PHP 50,000.00) for each recipient, to be  
8 given to overseas workers who have been the victims of abuse from their  
9 employers, or those who have been repatriated from host countries due to  
10 natural or man-made calamities.  
11

12 **SECTION 4. Transparency.** - In the utilization of the Fund, the  
13 principles of accountability and transparency must be fully observed. As such,  
14 every Filipino citizen has a right to, and shall, on request, be given access to  
15 any information pertinent to this law, when such information is under the  
16 control or in the possession of any government agency involved in the  
17 implementation of this law. Government agencies involved in the  
18 implementation of this law shall maintain appropriate records of their actions  
19 under this law, particularly with regard to the disbursements of funds and the  
20 identity of recipients.  
21

22 **SECTION 5. Implementing Agencies and Rules.** - The Overseas  
23 Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) is hereby tasked to implement this  
24 Act, and shall coordinate with and be supported by the Department of Labor  
25 and Employment, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. The abovementioned  
26 agencies, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management and  
27 representatives of the private sector, and recognized overseas labor  
28 organizations, shall issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations to  
29 implement the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days after its effectivity.  
30

31 **SECTION 6. Appropriations.** - The fund needed to initially implement  
32 the provisions of this Act must be sourced primarily from the General  
33 Appropriations Act. The appropriation allotted to the Assistance to Nationals  
34 and Legal Assistance Fund in the Department of Foreign Affairs, and to the  
35 OWWA, shall serve as core fund for the program. Thereafter the yearly PHP 1  
36 Billion appropriation shall be sourced from the earnings of the Bureau of  
37 Immigration, Duty- Free Philippines, passport processing fees of the  
38 Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, and  
39 other relevant offices or agencies as may be recommended and identified in the

1 implementing rules and regulations.  
2

3           **SECTION 7. Separability Clause.** - If any provision of this Act is  
4 declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity  
5 of the other provisions hereof.  
6

7           **SECTION 8. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, executive orders,  
8 presidential decrees, presidential proclamations, rules and regulations or parts  
9 thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or  
10 modified accordingly.  
11

12           **SECTION 9. Effectivity Clause.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15)  
13 days from its publication in the Official Gazette or at least two (2) national  
14 newspapers of general circulation.  
15

16           Approved.  
17  
18