

SENATE
S. No. 1509

20 MAY -4 P 5:21

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Introduced by SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

AN ACT
PENALIZING PRANK CALLS IN EMERGENCY HOTLINES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 2005, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued an appeal to the public to refrain from making prank calls to Patrol 117, which was then the Nationwide Emergency Hotline Number. According to a report, "99 percent of total calls received by the 117 Call Center in Metro Manila . . . are illegitimate calls, which include pranks calls and those seeking directory assistance."¹

In 2011, the DILG reported that the 117 Hotline had been receiving 13,000 calls a day. Unfortunately, "only 2% of the calls are made by those in need," and "a lot of these [calls received] are prank calls."²

In March 2020, the DILG reported that the Emergency 911 Hotline (which replaced Patrol 117 by virtue of Executive Order 56, s. 2018), received 2.54 million prank calls, 37,440 legitimate calls, 16,763 non-emergency [calls] and 9.7 million incomplete [calls].³

¹ <https://www.philstar.com/metro/2005/12/29/314113/dilg-pranksters-spare-hotline-117>

² <https://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/metro-manila/01/27/11/prank-calls-plague-hotline-117>

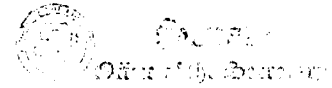
³ <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/3/4/DILG-prank-calls-receive-million.html?fbclid=IwAR2WUWIfpPP83PrxStsvBMjQSIJEHv5UanxAgJKvPF4WnCNtJzOzB11zL0M>

For years, prank calls have infested our government emergency hotlines, disrupted the speedy service of our responders to actual emergencies, and possibly prevented victims from being properly attended to and from reaching the proper authorities since the lines were unnecessarily busy.

This bill seeks to define and penalize prank calls plaguing our national emergency hotlines, consistent with our State policy of protecting the people and promoting their general welfare, safety and security. Hefty fine and imprisonment are put in place to serve as deterrent to "pranksters" who irresponsibly clog and choke the network of our emergency response mechanisms.

The passage of this measure is earnestly sought.


RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.



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

- 1 Sec. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "*Anti-Prank Calls Act.*"
- 2 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
- 3 promote the general welfare of the people. Towards this end, the State aims to protect
- 4 public safety and security, to maintain peace and order, to urgently respond to
- 5 emergencies and crisis situations, and to prohibit malicious and improper use of
- 6 telecommunication devices.
- 7 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:
- 8 (a) "Prank call" refers to the use of a service of a telecommunication service
- 9 provider that involves any of the following:
- 10 (1) making false requests or false alarm of an emergency, knowing the
- 11 report or information to be false;
- 12 (2) willfully conveying false information, hoax or fraudulent report aimed to
- 13 threaten, intimidate or frighten, or to cause and create confusion,
- 14 inconvenience, distress, or panic;
- 15 (3) repeatedly initiating an unnecessary call, without speaking, deliberately
- 16 hanging up or breaking the service connection as or after the call is
- 17 answered;
- 18

1 (4) making a mischievous or malicious call to trick or fool someone with the
2 intention to annoy, abuse, threaten, harass, or solicit any response
3 which is obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy or indecent.

4 (b) "Emergency" refers to a serious, unexpected and often dangerous situation
5 requiring immediate attention and action, usually accidents, fires, crime
6 incidents, natural disasters, public disturbances, and other circumstances
7 of similar nature.

8 (c) "Hotline" refers to a direct telecommunication set up for a specific purpose.

9 **Sec. 4. Prohibition.** – Emergency hotlines established for the purpose of
10 responding to emergency and crisis situations shall, at all times, be free from receiving
11 unnecessary and senseless calls. It shall be prohibited for any individual to make prank
12 calls to any hotline at any time.

13 **Sec. 5. Penalties.** – Any person who violates this Act shall be imprisoned for not
14 more than two (2) years or fined not more than One hundred thousand pesos
15 (P100,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court.

16 *Provided,* That the penalties shall be imposed without prejudice to other
17 liabilities under the Revised Penal Code or any special law arising out of the prohibited
18 act herein.

19 **Sec. 6. Separability Clause.** – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
20 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision or part not otherwise
21 affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

22 **Sec. 7. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
23 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or
24 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
25 accordingly.

26 **Sec. 8. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
27 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

28
29 *Approved,*