

20 MAY 20 P2:58

SENATE

S. No. 1539

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Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

AN ACT
MANDATING THE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY OF DISASTER-RELATED
INFORMATION

EXPLANATORY NOTE

During disasters and other emergency situations, an informed public is a prepared and ready public. Giving our constituents with easily-understandable, up-to-date and reliable information is a crucial aspect of any disaster preparedness and response plan. Unfortunately, some of the government's announcements, bulletins and advisories regarding impending disasters or calamities fall short of this objective. Most, if not all, are confined only to the use of the English language; or, if ever they are translated, it is only to the Filipino language and not to the many other regional languages and dialects that our citizens speak, write and converse with.

This bill aims to put an end to this practice. Under this bill, it shall be required for all government agencies and local government units to convert in an easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any other appropriate regional language or dialect all their announcements, advisories, press releases, issuances and any other information relevant to a local or national disaster or emergency. The translation of the information shall be to (1) Filipino and (2) other regional language/s or dialect/s, as deemed necessary by the government agency and local government unit concerned considering the geographical location of the affected communities and the intended recipients of the information. The translated information shall be disseminated as widely as possible through all available media and communication channels.

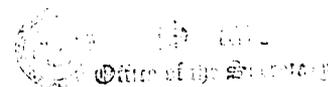
Through this proposed measure, all disaster-related information shall be language-accessible and readily-comprehensible especially to speakers of our regional languages and dialects.

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



MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator





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**AN ACT
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INFORMATION**

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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as "Language Accessibility
2 of Public Information on Disasters Act."
3

4 Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The right of the people to information on
5 matters of public concern is recognized in our Constitution. Indeed, communication
6 and information occupies a vital role in nation-building. In times of disaster and other
7 emergencies, and to render meaningful and effective the right of the people to
8 information, it shall be ensured that announcements, advisories and similar public
9 communications are accessible in terms of the language or dialect used.
10

11 Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, these terms are
12 defined as follows:
13

- 14 a. *"Disaster"* - a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society
15 involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and
16 impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope

1 using its own resources. Disasters are often described as a result of the
2 combination of: the exposure to a hazard; the conditions of vulnerability that
3 are present; and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the
4 potential negative consequences, Disaster impacts may include loss of life,
5 injury, disease and other negative effects on human, physical, mental and social
6 well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of
7 services, Social and economic disruption and environmental degradation;

- 8 b. "*Emergency*"- unforeseen or sudden occurrence, especially danger, demanding
9 immediate action;
- 10 c. "*State of Calamity*"- a condition involving mass casualty and/or major damages
11 to property, disruption of means of livelihoods, roads and normal way of life of
12 people in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of natural or human-
13 induced hazard.
- 14

15 Section 4. *Scope of Application.* – This Act shall cover disasters and other kinds
16 of emergencies which are (1) national in scope, as declared through a State of
17 Calamity or State of National Emergency by the President of the Philippines, and (2)
18 provincial, city or municipal in scope, as declared through a State of Calamity or
19 Emergency by the appropriate local government unit.

20

21 Section 5. *Language Accessibility of Disaster-Related Information.* – In relation
22 to disasters and other emergencies covered by Section 4 of this Act, it shall be
23 mandatory for all government agencies and local government units to convert in an
24 easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any other appropriate regional
25 language/s or dialect/s all their announcements, advisories, press releases, issuances
26 and any other information relevant to such disaster or emergency, including but not
27 limited to:

- 28 a) Typhoon warnings, signals and other advisories by the Philippine
29 Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration
30 (PAG-ASA);
- 31 b) Volcano, earthquake, tsunami and landslide advisories and bulletins by

- 1 the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS);
- 2 c) Announcements, bulletins and other advisories of the National Disaster
- 3 Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and the Local
- 4 Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMCs);
- 5 d) Information on epidemics, outbreaks and public health emergencies of
- 6 the Department of Health (DOH); and
- 7 e) Information on the Social Amelioration Program, emergency assistance
- 8 and other social protection measures of the Department of Social
- 9 Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- 10

11 Section 6. *Translation to Filipino and Other Regional Language or Dialect.* – The

12 translation of the information covered by this Act shall be to (1) Filipino and (2) other

13 regional language/s or dialect/s, as deemed necessary by the government agency and

14 local government unit concerned considering the geographical location of the affected

15 communities and the intended recipients of the information. The translated

16 information shall be disseminated as widely as possible through all available media

17 and communication channels.

18

19 Section 7. *Role of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino.* – The Komisyon sa Wikang

20 Filipino (KWF) shall render the necessary technical assistance and expertise to the

21 government agencies and local government units and monitor their compliance to the

22 duties mandated by this Act.

23

24 Section 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from

25 the effectivity of this Act, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) in consultation with

26 other relevant government agencies and stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules

27 and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

28

29 Section 9. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,

30 proclamations, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with

31 the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

32

1 Section 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act, or the
2 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid,
3 the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

4
5 Section 11. *Effectivity Clause.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
6 from its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
7 circulation.

8
9 *Approved,*