


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

7 JUN 30 P4:15

SENATE

RECEIVED BY: 

S. No. 251

INTRODUCED BY THE HONORABLE MAR ROXAS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The rapid changes in technology leave in their wake the obsolescence of laws passed prior to the information revolution of the latter half of the 20th Century, and this is something Congress must remedy.


One such crucial change that has occurred is in the nature of mass media. In connection to this, Republic Act No. 52, otherwise known as the Sotto Press Freedom Law of 1946, which exempts publishers, editors, columnists and reporters of any newspaper, magazine or periodical of general circulation from being compelled to reveal the source of any news report or information they gathered and published in confidence, unless the courts or Congress finds that the revelation of such is crucial to national security.

The law was passed in 1946, when the broadcast industry was still a fledgling institution and when internet media was not yet part of the people's imagination. That said, the law fails to protect broadcast and internet media practitioners and wire services, as the letter of the law only includes the print media in such protection.

While the principle of the Sotto Law remains sound after over 60 years, it failed to anticipate technological developments in mass media, and scope has become far too limited for the comfort of journalists, who constantly have to face the ire of their news subjects, especially when these subjects' anomalous dealings are made known or questioned. The proposed amendments to the law would help ensure the protection of journalists and their sources in this regard.

It has been said many times that a free press is crucial in building a democracy. In fact, the 1987 Constitution heralds it as a protected right. However, the concept of a free press has been attacked in recent times. Media practitioners have been subject to threats and harassment, while many have even been murdered in the line of duty. The approval of this measure—as well as a proposed measure to limit the venue of filing libel suits—could be a small way by which Congress may help alleviate the plight of journalists.

To further advance the cause of press freedom, and other matters related to it, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


M A R ROXAS
Senator

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)

7 JUN 30 P4:35

SENATE
S. No. 251

RECEIVED BY: [Signature]

INTRODUCED BY THE HONORABLE MAR ROXAS

AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 53, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS 'AN ACT
TO EXEMPT THE PUBLISHER, EDITOR OR REPORTER OF ANY PUBLICATION FROM
REVEALING THE SOURCE OF PUBLISHED NEWS OR INFORMATION OBTAINED IN
CONFIDENCE BY INCLUDING WITHIN ITS COVERAGE JOURNALIST FORM
BROADCAST NEWS AGENCIES, INTERNET PUBLICATIONS AND WIRE SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. Section 1 of Republic Act No. 53, as amended, is hereby further
2 amended to read as follows:

3 'Section 1. Without prejudice to his liability under the civil and
4 criminal laws. [the publisher, editor, columnist or duly accredited
5 reporter of any newspaper, magazine or periodical of general
6 circulation cannot be compelled to reveal the source of any news-
7 report or information appearing in said publication which was related
8 in confidence to such publisher, editor or reporter unless the court or a
9 House or committee of Congress] A DULY ACCREDITED
10 JOURNALIST OR ANY PRINT, BROADCAST, INTERNET, OR WIRE
11 SERVICE ORGANIZATION, INCLUDING THE PUBLISHER,
12 STATION OWNER AND/OR MANAGER, BUREAU CHIEF, EDITOR,
13 NEWS EDITOR, WRITER OR REPORTER, CORRESPONDENT,
14 OPINION COLUMNIST OR COMMENTATOR, CARTOONIST,

PHOTOGRAPHER, OR OTHER PRACTITIONER INVOLVED IN
THE WRITING, EDITING, COMMENTING ON THE NEWS FOR
MASS CIRCULATION CANNOT BE COMPELLED TO REVEAL THE
SOURCE OF ANY NEWS ITEM, NEWS REPORT OR INFORMATION
APPEARING OR BEING REPORTED OR DISSEMINATED IN SAID
MEDIA, WHICH WAS RELATED IN CONFIDENCE TO SUCH
JOURNALIST OR PRACTITIONER UNLESS THE COURT OR THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OR THE SENATE OR ANY OF ITS
COMMITTEES finds that such revelation is demanded by the security of
the State.”

SEC. 2. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders or issuances, or any part thereof,
which are inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 3. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect upon its publication in at least
one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,