

SENATE

S.B. NO. 1952

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senate President Manny Villar

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Trees are nature's lungs. The oxygen they produce help control air pollution, so that it is only right to nurture and cherish them. The environment is crying out for our attention, love and nurturing and is hurting due to our negligence. The wanton destruction and cutting of trees have largely contributed to the deterioration and degradation of our environment.


The denudation of our forests has led to the loss of the natural protection that forest provides from the destruction of floods, typhoons, erosions and destruction of watersheds. Flash floods and soil erosion have become the country's greatest problems, leaving billions of pesos worth of damage to properties and numerous human lives lost. Indeed, there is a need to replenish our tree resources in order to curve the effects of global warming, save our watersheds from drying up, prevent landslides and flashfloods, and prevent our lands from depleting its nutrients thru soil erosion.

Restoring our forest cover to protect and preserve the environment should be at the core of every governmental agenda. However, tree planting has not been given the importance that it deserves. During the last century, a specific day every year was set aside to be dedicated to tree planting when standing trees were deemed insufficient for beautification and ecological purposes. Since then, the celebration became known as Arbor Day. It is the day to praise Mother Nature for the bounty of lush greeneries it offers and a day for individuals to renew their commitment to protect the environment.

In the Philippines, President Arroyo, issued Proclamation No. 643 dated June 9, 2004 amending Proclamation No. 396 dated June 2, 2003, declaring every 25th of June as Philippines Arbor Day to be observed nationwide by planting trees and ornamental plants and other forms of related activities. The said Proclamation however, did not address the issue of forest denudation nor help in promoting a healthier ecosystem for the people.


This bill, therefore, seeks to declare an Arbor Day in the Philippines, mandating all local government units to set aside one day each calendar year for the planting of trees. It aims to enlist the participation of the various sectors of society in restoring the grandeur of our forest lands. Indeed, there is really a need for a collaborative effort between the State and its citizenry to fulfill the constitutional mandate that: "The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature."

Considering the significance of Arbor Day and the current relevance of giving impetus to forest conservation, early passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


MANNY VILLAR
Senate President

S E N A T E

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AN ACT

AUTHORIZING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS TO DECLARE A DAY DEDICATED TO TREE PLANTING TO BE KNOWN AS "ARBOR DAY", APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SEC. 1. Short Title - This Act shall be known as the "**Arbor Day Act of 2007.**"

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balance and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. Towards this end, the vital role and importance of trees in ecological stability is recognized. Hence, there is a need for a collaborated effort between the State and its citizenry to combat the loss of our natural resources and rejuvenate our environment by undertaking a nationwide tree-planting activities and providing effective measures for their maintenance and sustainability.

SEC. 3. Coverage - This Act shall apply to all provinces, cities, municipalities and their component barangays.

SEC. 4. Proclamation of Arbor Day - All provinces, cities and municipalities with their component barangays shall be required to declare an Arbor Day or Tree-planting Day, by appropriate proclamation of their respective local chief executive through an ordinance passed by the respective local Sanggunian, at a fixed date every calendar year as shall be deemed conducive to the proper time and season for planting trees in the respective localities. Although adoption of uniform dates for its celebration shall be encouraged,

varying dates may be allowed in order to afford flexibility in the planning and implementing of the programs for tree planting.

Provided, however: That the Arbor Day designated may be declared as a public holiday in order to ensure the participation of the different sectors of society and such declaration may be embodied in the proclamation that local chief executives are authorized to do under this Act.

SEC. 5. Creation of Arbor Day Committee - There shall be created in every province, city and municipality an Arbor Day Celebration Committee the composition of which shall be selected by the concerned local chief executive. The members shall preferably, composed of field officers of various government agencies based in the locality, but not limited to the following:

- a) Local Sanggunian;
- b) Local Environment and Natural Resources Office ;
- c) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- d) Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI);
- e) Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- f) Department of Education (DepEd);
- g) Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- h) Department of Agriculture (DA);
- i) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH);
- j) Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
- k) Department of Tourism (DOT);
- l) Philippine National Police (PNP);
- m) Liga ng mga Barangay;
- n) Civic Organizations;
- o) Sangguniang Kabataan (SK); and
- p) Media Associations.

SEC. 6. Supply and Distribution of Seedlings - The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) shall supply and distribute the seedlings to the local government units for the Tree Planting Program.

SEC. 7. Planting of Trees - All able-bodied citizens of the Philippines, who are at least 12 years of age, shall be required to plant one tree every year.

SEC. 8. Areas Covered by Tree Planting - The tree planting activities shall be done in any of the following areas:

- a) Private Lands;
- b) Public school grounds, gardens or other available areas within the school premises;
- c) Idle or vacant public lands;
- d) Public parks in urban and rural areas;
- e) Public lands such as roadside, along city and municipal streets and highways; and
- f) Private schools, parks and lands with the consent of the owner thereof.

SEC. 9. Maintenance of Trees - The Barangay Officials and deputized non-governmental organizations shall be responsible for the maintenance of such trees.

SEC. 10. Information and Monitoring - For information and monitoring purposes, all local government units shall submit to the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the actual date of the Arbor Day Celebration in their respective locality.

SEC. 11. Funding - For the initial implementation of this Act, there is hereby authorized to be created a fund to be derived from the budget of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) not otherwise appropriated. Thereafter, said funds shall be included in the annual budget of this department.

Sec. 12. Implementing Rules - The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), in coordination with the local government units and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 13. Separability Clause -If any provision of this Act or any part thereof be declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue in full force and effect.

SEC. 14. Repealing Clause - All laws, presidential decrees, proclamations, executive orders, or regulations and other issuances inconsistent with the provisions and/or purposes of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 15. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the official gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,