

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1589

Introduced by GABRIELA Women's Party List Representative Liza Largoza-Maza, Bayan Muna Party List Representatives Satur C. Ocampo, Teodoro A. Casino, and Joel G. Virador and Anak Pawis Party List Representatives Crispin B. Beltran and Rafael V. Mariano

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AN ACT
CHANGING THE NAME OF THE CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD 5 (C-5) TO ISABELO DELOS REYES HIGHWAY

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to name the Circumferential Road 5 (C-5) traversing Parañaque to Quezon City to Isabelo Delos Reyes Highway.

Isabelo Delos Reyes (born on July 6, 1864 in Vigan, Ilocos Sur) was a great nationalist with an undying belief in the capacity of the Filipino people to forge a sovereign and progressive nation. He was a visionary who pursued his ideals of an egalitarian and civilized society through his writings, in organizing workers and building institutions. He believed that Filipinos, like all human beings, are equipped with inherent reason, and that regardless of differences in social and economic status they have the God-given right to freedom and dignity. Towards these ends, he applied his many talents, his indefatigable energy, his resources, and his entire life.

Isabelo Delos Reyes, or Don Belong, took up law at the University of Sto. Tomas and graduated at age 22. Too young to practice law, he decided to become a full-time journalist. He was a prolific and talented writer; he read and wrote on a wide range of topics covering contemporary social, economic and political issues. He argued that indigenous culture is as valid as and on equal footing with western culture, and like all cultures, contingent on historical circumstances. And although he could have been a successful lawyer, he was not content in confining himself to the legal profession. He was also a businessman and landowner in Tondo, and Tarlac who was kind and considerate to his tenants and expected only reasonable return to his investments and labor. He was industrious, lived simply and was frugal. He abhorred indolence, ignorance and fought to abolish usury.

When the revolution broke out in 1896, Don Belong was arrested on suspicion of being a subversive. Imprisoned along with hundreds of Katipuneros, he wrote to Gov. Primo de Rivera thinking that the latter who projected himself as a moderate would be persuaded to initiate reforms. Instead of undertaking reforms, the Spanish Governor sent Don Belong to the

Montjuich prison in Barcelona. Released from prison on January 8, 1898, he joined European reformers and other rebels who fought the prevailing political and social system in Europe.

Don Belong returned home in October 1901 and joined another nationalist, Pascual Poblete in putting out a pro-labor paper, *El Grito del Pueblo*. On February 2, 1902 during the assembly of associations (*gremio*) of printers, lithographers, book binders and other workers, he helped organize, wrote the Constitution and was elected President of the first national labor union in the country, the Union Obrera Democratica (UOD). On August 3, 1902 at a similar assembly, Don Belong, exasperated by the denial by the Papal delegate to recognize the right of the Filipino clergy to lead the church in the Philippines, declared the establishment of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). The assembly named Father Gregorio Aglipay as the first Obispo Maximo. To Don Belong, to be truly independent, Filipinos must also establish and lead an independent Philippine church. He was reported to have declared at that meeting:

"We Filipinos can only seek justice through our own efforts and not through foreigners. Enough of the friars. Let us now form our own congregation of the Filipino church. Christ did not seek distinction among races. We are all equal before Him."

As President of UOD, he helped organize more workers who joined the Union by the hundreds. The American authorities, fearing the mounting success of the UOD and the IFI, accused him of murder on trumped up charges. He was summarily tried and jailed. To avoid further persecution of the labor union, Don Belong resigned and devoted more of his time to the newly established Independent Philippine Church. In 1905 he founded the Republican Party of the Philippines. He went back to Spain in 1906, engaged in business and wrote the most significant liturgical, theological and constitutional works of the IFI. He returned home in 1909. From 1912 to 1919 he served as Councilor of Manila and in 1922 he was elected Senator from Ilocos. Together with Bishop Aglipay, he advocated land reform and the welfare of laborers and peasants. After suffering a stroke in 1929, he withdrew from politics. He died on October 10, 1938 having sired 27 children with three wives whom he married in succession. His son, Isabelo, Jr. was Obispo Maximo of the IFI for 25 years and served the IFI and our country with distinction.

Isabelo Delos Reyes inspired Filipinos to gain their self-respect by ridding themselves of passive and mindless subservience to colonial rule and abusive authorities. His teachings live on through his prodigious writings on Philippine history, culture, languages, and literature. His determination in mobilizing his countrymen to fight tyranny and ignorance was unwavering and courageous. Renaming the C-5 after this staunch nationalist is not a simple mechanical act but an act to give due honor to our heroes, martyrs and distinguished fellowmen; to relive their spirit of courage, love of country and selflessness that would enrich our national soul, culture and pride as Filipinos.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

LIZA LARGOZA-MAZA
GABRIELA Women's Party List

SATUR C. OCAMPO
Bayan Muna Party List

TEODORO A. CASINO
Bayan Muna Party List

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CRISPIN B. BELTRAN
Anak Pawis Party List

RAFAEL V. MARIANO
Anak Pawis Party List

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

SECTION 1. In recognition of the eminent and patriotic services of the late Senator and labor leader Isabelo Delos Reyes, the name of Circumferential Road 5 (C-5) is hereby changed to Isabelo Delos Reyes Highway.

SECTION 2. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is hereby instructed to place the appropriate street names and markers along Isabelo Delos Reyes Highway.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,